dominance-resistance binary' (p 248). The task, he suggests, is not to erase but to extend the interpretive possibilities outside the confines of the binary.

These controversies reflect and inform theoretical and political debates about the nature of the state, the nature of policy and of political action. Feminist (and other) writers draw attention to the absence of the person in policy analysis, and of the need for what Franzway, Court and Connell (1989) call a 'practice-based account of the state' in which 'people matter' (p 47). This is not to suggest that analyses of policy can be reduced to an unproblematic interpretation of what policy actors do. It is, rather, to suggest that what policy becomes is, among other things, mediated by the interactions between differing models of the policy process and policy action. Individuals' accounts of policy action enable certain kinds of question to be explored about how models of the policy process and its relation to the state function to construct the everyday realities of being involved in policy work. For example, what kinds of positions are available for participants in the policy production process and how are these constituted? How are power relations set up and exercised within and between the players in a policy episode? How are the participants' 'stories' of the policy process to be interpreted? How is the 'interplay between figure and landscape' (Ball 1994b: 118) at the various levels and sites of the policy-making process to be interpreted?

There is a need to consider more clearly what differentiates one conception of policy from another in order to be able to ask what is concealed or made visible by each and how each constitutes the policy actor and the policy action. Differing models or constructs of the policy process are not just *about* policy environments, they operate discursively on those environments and construct material realities for policy actors. This is how 'what counts' is institutionalised, 'not by simple acts of free-will and human invention, but on the basis of the discursive conditions and warrants available' (McHoul & Luke 1989: 328). Thus the politically, or disciplinary, driven attempts to privilege certain constructions of the policy process can be read rather as 'inscriptions of legitimation than procedures that help us get closer to some "truth" capturable via language' (Lather 1991: 112).

In this section I have briefly noted some contemporary debates within the field of education policy analysis. Readers may be wondering at this stage why I have not engaged here with the field of language policy analysis and planning. This is because although the debates noted above are consistent with those occurring in relation to policy analysis in some other fields and disciplines, they are barely evident in much of language policy analysis and planning literature.

Indeed, part of the challenge of trying to make sense of adult literacy policy production and its effects lay in the limitations of the conceptual frameworks conventionally drawn on in the literature of language and literacy policy analysis. I wanted to move on from a view of policy actors in predefined roles with preconceived intentions, whether within consensual rationalist or conflict models of state and society relations. In the fields of language and literacy policy analysis, the dominant critical analytical position still appears to operate from the Left's 'safe haven of critique' (Luke 1995: 94). Of course, this is not to imply that much of my own work cannot be critiqued in these kinds of terms, as I explain in the next section.

Reflections of a literacy activist

The campaign for an adult literacy policy commitment had a long history. My involvement began in the mid-1980s when I became an executive member of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, a role that I continued to occupy until the end of 1999, apart from a brief departure between 1994 and 1996. In the absence of other than a 'common sense' understanding of what policy is, and how it gets to be made, my initial experience with policy was confronting, messy, and hard to make sense of. I recall our uncertainty, as the executive of a professional body, about how to 'do policy work'. Considering lobbyists to be the policy experts, we called them in to advise us. We adopted the dominant practices of the day and developed vision statements and strategic plans in the belief that these seemingly 'reasoned' practices would help set agendas and facilitate productive partnerships with policy-makers. I also sat on ministerial policy advisory committees for much of this time, enabling me to participate further in the myriad of activities around the text work of framing and setting policy agendas and priorities.

Mobilising around 'our' sense of the 'right' responses to, and interpretations of, the adult literacy policy developments of the early 1990s had ambiguous effects — pleasurable and exciting, divisive and unsettling — on 'our' sense of who 'we' thought 'we' were and what 'we' were trying to achieve through policy advocacy work. Many of the tensions of these times were fuelled by an 'essentialist conception' of the field of practice; oriented perhaps to a construction, an 'imagined community of the oppressed, disadvantaged or threatened' (Burgmann 1993: 19), a conception with no necessary basis in any empirical sense but nonetheless discursively very powerful.[3]

Yeatman (1995c) refers to the 'righteousness' of activists, and this captures well the earnestness of those days, as we championed the related causes of literacy and the disadvantaged. At this time, the work was motivated by an essentialist belief that we knew where the solutions to the policy problems lay. We thought that if only 'they' could understand the complexity of what they were dealing with then they would get the policy and/or its implementation 'right'. Reference, for example, to submissions that I co-authored in response to various policy initiatives, show a dominating concern to get the 'right' definitions and theories embedded in and informing policy documents. (See for example Australian Literacy Federation's submission to the Green Paper, Australian Literacy Federation 1991.)

No single measure (1989), my report of the first national survey of adult literacy, was also informed by an implicit understanding of policy-making as an incremental but largely rational process, a linear, top-down conception. At this time I saw the task to be to descriptively and empirically lay out the field of adult literacy and to contextualise, within economic and social justice frames, the challenging policy 'problem' of significant numbers of adults in Australia with low literacy competence. I wanted to clarify and present the policy problem as open to rational solutions, in an attempt to strengthen adult literacy's claim in the struggles and conflicts around the allocation of public funds. To 'put a figure' on the problem would hasten the 'policy cycle' process by generating such public interest in the issue that some kind of political and policy response would need to ensue.

The early 1990s saw increased interest in the concept of critical discourse analysis. This began to provide me with new tools of analysis to begin to explore some questions beginning to emerge for me about being involved in policy work. Drawing on the notion of discourse enabled a move beyond a concern with 'content' to an understanding of how texts and practices work to construct policy problems and responses to these problems in particular ways. Caught up in oppositional framings, as evident in Wickert (1991, 1992), I was concerned with how both the subject 'literacy' and the 'literate subject' were constituted in policy terms, with problematising the 'problem' rather than the process. Initially focusing on the policy texts themselves, a growing understanding of the concept of discourse led me to explore how the discursive practices of multiple sites contribute to dominant framings of adult literacy and how these get caught up in policy work. (Wickert 1993; Lee & Wickert 1995). Not yet present during this period, however, was any serious analysis of the *contexts* of policy text production as either sites of multiple and conflicting discourses or, in a more material sense, as evidence of rapidly changing state/society interrelations.

Although I became increasingly conscious of the need to, in Lather's terms 'think more about how we think' (1991: 39), I did not know where to turn. Writers, such as Threadgold and Luke, in their papers and presentations, spoke of the power of discourse and of the need for teachers to have more 'theory', 'something that will make the system legible' (Threadgold 1997: 366). Many felt confronted and/or confused by the complexity of such writings and unable to glean other than a superficial sense of the theoretical issues.

My writing at the time reveals a struggle between the pull of the resistance 'politics of rhetorical confrontation' (Yeatman 1995c) and a growing awareness that '[t]he new public management requires something different of community based policy activists: a willingness and capacity to enter into the business of co-designing and co-evaluating...publicly funded service delivery in cooperative partnerships with bureaucrats and often, consultants' (Yeatman 1995c). In other words, I knew, although I did not then have a way of theorising it, that to stand and barrack from the sidelines was not an option; and that '"the will to knowledge" is simultaneously part of the danger and a tool to combat that danger' (Rabinow 1984: 7).

I engaged with a developing awareness of how such techniques as strategic planning were contributory to the 'explosion' (Ransom 1997: 7) of new ways of 'being governed', and of the apparently paradoxical self-regulatory nature of these new technologies of 'surveillance' and control. At that time I was unfamiliar with the work of Foucault and thus with the ways of 'naming' that his work has generated. I now understand such practices to be instances of a 'disciplinary technology' (Rabinow 1984: 17), structuring the forms and operations of the dividing and normalising practices of 'governmentality'.

Thus, a Foucauldian concept of discourse explains how, despite scholarly rejection of 'traditional' models of policy-making, such models continue to circulate in discursively powerful ways, including within postmodern framings of policy action and intervention (See Luke 1995; Wickert in press). Thus, rather than dismiss supposedly discredited or 'inadequate' models of policy production, they must be seen as part of 'the field', carrying with them their own authorities (Foucault 1972). The notion of the 'politics of discourse', as an interpretational resource for the analysis of policy formation, rightly highlights the 'language' work that is so much of the work of doing policy. However, language is not only 'working' in relation to the text, it is also 'working' in the 'context of text production' to produce particular kinds of subjectivities and relationships, not just around the production of the text, but around all the processes around the production of the text.

From this perspective, policy texts do not only represent the outcomes of political struggles over meaning, they also represent the outcomes of the kinds of power relations made possible by the operations of the discourses of the policy-making process itself. The discursive practices of policy-making do not only frame how an issue is constructed when it is taken up as a concern of education policy, they also frame how the policy actors are constructed around the process of policy-making as well. That is, the discursive constraints and possibilities of the process itself will influence how the struggle for meaning occurs.

I referred earlier to the busyness of activism — the committees, projects, submissions and so on. Of course, as I now understand, what we were caught up in was the very reason why adult literacy had to 'have a policy'. Our activities were contributing to the knowledges and discursive practices that made 'aspects of existence thinkable and calculable, and amenable to deliberate and planned initiatives' (Miller & Rose 1990: 3).

Watts (1993–94: 125) cautions that 'we need to pay attention to the processes whereby particular social actors constitute both the problems and the solutions to these problems that become governmentality'. The predominance of projects concerned with national approaches to curriculum, assessment and reporting; with identifying and naming literacy 'competencies', and with trying to predict learning outcomes 'show us why we can no longer approach the relations of language and knowledge to social action in a naive or unhistorical way' (Watts 1993–94: 120). Inescapably we were/are implicated in the naming, organising and disciplining of adult literacy, and in rendering the real 'rationalisable, transparent and programmable' (Gordon 1980: 245).

The work to be done is 'to relate the discourse...to the practical field in which it is deployed' (Foucault 1991b: 61) by exploring the 'productivity' of the texts in and around policy production in 'producing subjectivities' (Fuller & Lee 1997) and framing effects. This is a profound shift from either naive empiricism or ideology analysis, to an emphasis on the practices and techniques by which government occurs — a 'suspension of assumptions about the necessary locus and source of power in favour of an analysis of the means of rule, administration and government' (Dean 1995: 570).

Conclusion

The stories of actors involved in policy struggles have been overlooked in the preoccupation with the 'speculative manipulation' (Smith 1990: 74) of conceptual and theoretical issues, exemplified in education policy analysis's Marxist/pluralist 'stand off' (Lingard 1993). The continuing desire for abstract models of how policy works deflects attention from attempts to show 'the sense of' (Yates 1995) different stories of being involved in policy; such models concentrate on matters of issue, not the people; on 'commentary and critique' rather than fieldwork (Ball 1990: 9). State-centric theories subjugate and gloss over 'the interface between the immediate, the personal, the ordinary and policy' (Ball 1994c: 176). Yet it is how policy actors, inside or outside the state, make sense of their experiences of activism that will influence how they enter the policy-making arenas again.

Adult literacy as a matter requiring a policy response is not going to go away. The results of the latest round of the OECD's international surveys, which includes Australia, were released in late 1997 and caused the same kind of noise in the system as the results of my survey did some years previously. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains disturbingly high. Ineffective, short-term programs, subject to political whim and ideology, come and go. Perhaps the question is not, as Lo Bianco asks, whether adult literacy is a policy tractable issue in Australia today (1997a). One problem, he argues, is that once the issue is named, it becomes subject to the 'values and approaches of the bureaucrat technician...which are naturalised and stand apart from the routines, values and culture of the 'practitioners' in a given field' (p 9). One of the purposes of this chapter is to suggest that the proposition of opposing cultures is a question for interrogation, in that such a discursive positioning may be obscuring possibilities for policy intervention.

A choice for adult literacy to be located outside the material effects of contemporary policy discourses is illusory. To constitute the policy problem of adult literacy outside the new public management assumptions, through which the business of the management of claims on the state is now conceived, will be to marginalise it as a policy issue. The radical literacy agenda cannot be reclaimed because 'presentness is all we have', not some humanist romantic ideal of it. Freedom, Yeatman argues, resides in testing the limits of what we have, not in accepting or denying its reality (1995a).

Knowing how to speak to power requires a reflective capacity to learn from experience and a willingness to become 'literate in the new technologies of governmental management' (Yeatman 1995b: 104). Eschewing the modernist desire to 'Speak Truth to Power' (Wildavsky 1979), more needs to be understood about how 'Power decides what Truth is' (Minogue 1983: 79). My concern is to explore how and whether dominant accounts of policy action inform or confuse the efforts of many of those who work to achieve a public policy commitment. The theoretical field of policy analysis is not an easy one to enter, requiring the capacity to read the politics of the differing, competing and contradictory disciplinary and discursive positions that claim to know and name it. There is often hostility to the intellectualising of policy work as though this somehow dilutes the required focus of attention on the desired goal. However, as the nation's attention is turned yet again to the 'literacy crisis', a sophisticated 'policy literacy' will be required of those who see their task to keep adult literacy on the policy agenda.

Notes

1 This chapter is a much reworked version of Wickert (1997).

2 ALLP initiatives were linked to a three-year program. The third and fourth columns indicate the ongoing impact of the ALLP initiatives.

3 See Lee and Wickert (1995) for the beginnings of an exploration of this claim, through an analysis of some of the 'foundational' texts in adult literacy in Australia.

4

Although it wasn't broken, it certainly was fixed: Interventions in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program 1991–1996

Helen Moore

> ...there is no smooth path of development in the evolution of policies...lasting interventions have often arisen in surprising and aleatory fashion and in relation to apparently marginal or obscure difficulties in social or economic existence, which for particular reasons have come to assume political salience for a brief period.
> (Miller & Rose 1993: 77)

> Nobody ever thought that they [that is, our working conditions and career paths] would disappear as easily as that.
> (Extract from interview data)

> There's a lot of historical revisionism going on.
> (Extract from interview data)

Introduction[1]

In February 1999, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in Australia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a high profile conference entitled 'The AMEP: 50 years of nation building'. The conference brochure noted that the AMEP had assisted approximately 1.5 million immigrants since it began, that its current budget was $95 million, and that in 1997–98 it had provided 9 million hours of tuition in English as a second language (ESL) to about 39,000 clients from 89 language backgrounds. The Immigration Minister's introduction celebrated the AMEP as 'the only language program of its kind in the world...acknowledged as a world leader and Australia's most important migrant settlement program'. The conference would, he said:

> ...showcase the important contribution the program is making to our nation-building process, to the successful settlement of non-English speaking migrants and refugees, and the maximisation of Australia's cultural diversity. The conference will also provide new strategic thinking for the AMEP to serve the community with continued excellence into the new millennium.[2]

Those within the AMEP are likely to have interpreted the mention of 'strategic thinking' as ministerial code. It hints, albeit ever so slightly, at radical changes in the program during the 1990s which, at the time of the conference, were far from being played out. These changes reflected global trends in education and other social services. They included a considerable reduction in the program's mandate, the replacement of a nationally managed teaching service by competitive contracting to public and private sector providers, and a move from locally developed curriculum to a national curriculum, assessment and reporting framework. Such developments have been variously and revealingly described in the literature as, among other things, marketisation (Marginson 1997a, 1997b), the rise of the New Right (Ball 1990; Dale & Ozga 1993; Hickox 1995; Knight, Lingard & Porter 1993) and the creation of the 'audit society' (Power 1994).

In this chapter, I explore these changes to the AMEP using data from interviews with government officers and educators. Although the changes I have listed were officially justified as ensuring the AMEP's accountability, my data provides evidence that this goal does not adequately explain what happened. In search of an explanation, I use literature that explores Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' and offers interesting ways of approaching the complexities of policy-making.

The chapter is organised as follows. Following an elaboration of my position in this chapter, I outline a perspective on policy using the governmentality literature. I then examine the programs of the Labor government (1983–96) and describe the AMEP prior to the changes in the 1990s. In the remainder of the chapter, I consider the reasons for interventions in the program, the key interventions that were made and some of their effects.

The position of observer

It is now commonplace in the social sciences to acknowledge that no position is neutral and to disdain 'archimedean' judgments that 'assess the rest of us and the validity of what we do' (Yeatman 1990: 149). A further step along this path, taken by several Australian policy researchers, is to write from the position of 'policy activist' (Yeatman 1998). Here one not only acknowledges one's positioning but espouses a cause. For example, Wickert, a leading policy activist in the adult literacy field, describes herself as seeking 'to position adult literacy in such a way that it would not be easily marginalised within contemporary powerful discourses of government' (Wickert in press: 343). She asks why 'socially committed academics' and bureaucratic 'policy managers' find it 'so difficult to work together' and argues that academics should look for spaces in which they can work constructively with state officials (pp 339, 357). She also criticises Luke (1995) for describing this kind of 'collaborative intervention' as 'getting our hands dirty', since this implies 'the privileging of academic knowledge over the practical knowledge of practitioners' (p 357).

However, Wickert (in press) does not examine what academics might actually offer to causes or to those with whom they collaborate. Yeatman argues that academics' distinctive contribution to furthering 'democratising claims' is 'intellectually credible "observation"' (1994: 37, 39). This can contribute to the reflection and practice of policy-makers, activists of all kinds, and those on whose behalf both policy-makers and activists act. I seek to make this kind of contribution here.

Yeatman also proposes that 'what Said termed the problematic of the observer' is 'non-resolvable' (1994: 39). I take this to refer, in simple terms, to the proverbial impossibility of simultaneously riding a bicycle and observing one's own actions. The observer's position is a *particular* position with its own constraints. Adopting it invites distance. It is difficult to imagine how one might act as an observer of and protagonist in the same things at the same time.

So, for example as occurs in this chapter, an academic observer might seek to scrutinise alliances and the causes they advance. But for partners in a cause, such scrutiny by one of them inhibits action and is generally seen as disloyal. In regard to policy-making and implementation, although state authorities frequently seek to utilise academic expertise in devising and legitimating their programs,[3] academic credibility — and its power to make truth claims — rests crucially on the distance that is assumed to exist between these claims and state authorities' requirements (Rose 1993). Because state authorities have difficulty tolerating the freedom and distance on which the production of this expertise depends (Hindess 1997a), considerable difficulties can occur if academics adopt the observer's position when working in partnership with government officers on state-sponsored projects.[4]

The observer's position need not be a disguise for neutrality. Like Wickert, I am happy to declare my activist commitments, in my case, to furthering professionalism in ESL provision. I warmly endorse the Minister's praise of the AMEP's contribution to this. My personal reason for the exploration in this chapter is that, as activists for ESL, my colleagues and I found the period I discuss particularly difficult and I seek to understand this. There is no neutrality in my desire to use the observer's position to gain a better understanding of what happened to the AMEP in the first half of the 1990s. Further, in this position, I am interested in (and actively pursuing) observations that have intellectual credibility.

To the extent that the observer seeks distance from the action and its protagonists in order to make judgments and thereby understand better, this position is, by definition, 'archimedean'. To the extent that, for example, Wickert or I scrutinise the causes we espouse and others' actions (or our own) in promoting them, we adopt this position. It *is* a position of power: the power of observation. Utilising that power is the reason for adopting it.

Where this position might be resisted and disputed is if an observer claims the power to observe everything equally well, although, in theory, everything may be available for observation. A gaze in one direction blocks out other directions: any set of observations is necessarily both partial and incomplete. Thus, in this chapter, answers to the question of what might constitute ESL professionalism are implied, not argued. And whether ESL is in fact of service to immigrants, or indeed whether immigrants should claim any special kind of service, is not considered. However, the observer's stance makes these questions possible and does not refuse them.

Whether in the role of observer or policy activist, academics cannot equalise the power relations between themselves and others whose causes they wish to further (Yeatman 1994: 40). Yeatman's solution to Wickert's criticism of Luke is that 'observed needs' must be crucially distinguished from 'expressed needs' and, if policy-makers and academics are committed to the enhancement of democracy, they will accord expressed needs *their own place* in a 'polity of exchange and dialogue' (Yeatman 1994: 40).

My remarks here should not be taken as seeking to deny a place in the academy for the advocacy of particular causes. In democratic societies, activism is assumed to be an option for everyone in any venue. There is nothing particular about academic activism, that is, academics struggling to further their own or others' causes, aside maybe from the rhetorical skills and useful knowledge that some may bring to bear. In contrast, the considerable dangers of confusion, lies and abuse of power lie in academic activism that disguises itself as observation and attempts to claim this distinctive power.

Policies, programs, government, *the* government and the state

According to a seminal paper in the governmentality literature, policy is 'a language for depicting the domain in question that claims both to grasp the nature of that reality represented, and literally to represent it in a form amenable to political deliberation, argument and scheming' (Miller & Rose 1993: 80). Policy is both representation and intervention. As representation, policy renders the realities of various domains (for example, political, bureaucratic, educational and individual) into a particular kind of thought. As intervention — the other side of the same coin — policies seek 'to translate thought into the domain of reality' (p 82). The word 'governmentality', coined by Foucault (1991a), aims to capture the interconnection between the practices of government and how these are thought.

As both representation and intervention, policies express 'an eternal optimism that a domain or society could be administered better or more effectively, that reality is, in some way or another programmable' (Miller & Rose 1993: 78). Policies and programs continually proliferate, justified by the supposed or actual failure of existing versions and the consequent need 'to devise or propose programs that would work better' in delivering whatever is deemed as desirable (p 78). In this process of proliferation, whether existing programs are indeed deficient (from anyone's point of view) is beside the point. The warrant for proliferation lies in *representing* them as so.[5] The conditions that create the possibility for this kind of representation are, as suggested in the epigraph to this chapter, often fortuitous and not necessarily straightforward. But, as Miller and Rose (1993: 84–5) point out, the potential for this kind of representation is always present:

> Whilst 'governmentality' is eternally optimistic, 'government' is a congenitally failing operation. The world of programs is heterogeneous and rivalrous, and the solutions for one program tend to be the problems for another.

From a governmentality perspective, policy and program development are not just the province of those directly involved in *the* government of a nation (that is, politicians and government officers, henceforth 'state authorities'). Governmental programs and policies are devised and implemented by the many different authorities who seek to 'shape, normalise and instrumentalise the conduct, thought, decisions and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable' (Miller & Rose 1993: 82). These authorities are located in, for example, 'medical, educational, insurantial, managerial, therapeutic, bureaucratic, ethical, [and] fiscal sites' (Hunter 1993: 182). Educators are, therefore, engaged in government in this sense.

This notion of government dispenses with assumptions that the state is a 'relatively coherent and calculating political subject' (Miller & Rose 1993: 77). Nor is the state seen as a carrier for other more authentic sites of power, for example, the power of capital. A governmentality perspective does not assume, search for or try to understand a single controlling agent, group, agency or structure that determines state policies and their enactment. Miller and Rose (1993: 83–4) propose that modern liberal democratic government works:

> ...not through the direct imposition of force, but through a delicate affiliation of a loose assemblage of agents and agencies into a functioning network. This involves alliances formed not only because one agent is dependent upon another for funds, legitimacy or some other resource that can be used for persuasion or compulsion, but also because one actor comes to convince another that their problems or goals are intrinsically linked, that their interests are consonant, that each can solve their difficulties or achieve their ends by joining forces or working along the same lines.

This approach to government invites us to examine the development and interaction of 'functioning networks of power' *within* particular governments, in *other* governmental sites, and *between* state authorities and other agents and agencies. In this chapter, I deal particularly with the bureaucratic alliances that came into play under Labor in the 1980s and the 1990s. Space does not permit exploration of the governmental regimes of other actors, such as ESL educators, and only brief indications of how these regimes related to and interacted with political and bureaucratic networks.[6]

My argument is that no matter what the AMEP had achieved it could not be tolerated by rival networks of power ascendant under Labor. From their perspective, the AMEP was a failing program requiring intervention.

Constructing the consensus alliance

In 1983, Labor took federal office on the strength of optimistic promises that existing failing policies would be replaced by more effective ones.[7] The problems caused by developments internationally (notably, the collapse of fixed exchange rates in 1971, the 1973–74 and 1979–80 oil crises and the 1974 and 1982–83 economic downturns) were strongly coloured by local issues. Labor's electoral campaign emphasised reconciliation and promised 'consensus'. Consensus offered new hope and a strategic contrast with Labor's previous stormy term in office (1971–75), the subsequent Liberal-National coalition government (1975–83) whose accession to power had generated unprecedented acrimony and a constitutional crisis,[8] and escalating strike-ridden conflict with the trade union movement. A consensual environment would create the conditions required for responsible economic management, most specifically, in reversing inflation, poor trade balances and youth unemployment.

Labor's commitment to consensus was not simply rhetorical. Its leader and previous head of the peak trade union body, Bob Hawke, had gained a reputation for reaching solutions in industrial conflicts. The new government capitalised on its traditional ties with the unions while forging new formal and informal alliances with its traditional foes, namely business and industry. This alliance was crucial to Labor's continued hold on office. Both unions and employers were persuaded that their goals were intrinsically linked and could be furthered through joining forces under Labor's leadership in its ambitious program of economic restructuring. At the heart of this program lay an accord between the government and unions. The unions, through their peak body, agreed to avoid strikes, regulate wage demands and streamline job classifications and promotion paths. In return, employers conceded moderate wage increases, improved working conditions and universal superannuation benefits. To workers, employers and the general electorate, Labor offered (and delivered) tax cuts, lower inflation, improved social security benefits and, until the 1990–91 recession, increased employment rates.

For Yeatman and numerous other academic commentators, economic restructuring entailed a 'replacement of public policy objectives couched in terms of social goods by public policy objectives couched in terms of economic goods' (Yeatman 1991, cited in Marginson 1992: 1). Hindess sees this shift as a significant global change in 'governmental perceptions of relations between national economic activity and other aspects of the life of the national community' (1998: 222). Modern liberal government rests on the assumption that the economy is a naturally self-regulating system that must be understood and fostered for the good of the population. Until approximately the 1970s and early 1980s, it was also assumed that this system was relatively self-contained at the national level. Economic growth was 'a resource for other component parts or aspects of a larger national unity' (p 222). Growth could be used for 'investment on the one hand, and for such purposes as national defence, extravagant display and social welfare on the other' (p 222).

However, this view could not be sustained in the face of growing international trade, new technologies that made foreign investment easier, and large-scale financial movements that destabilised international trading relations (Hindess 1998: 218). It was also undermined by developments in national accounting technologies which enabled 'increasingly disaggregated econometric models of particular national economies' (p 219). As Marginson (1997a) documents, these developments and the economic problems of the 1970s were capitalised on by an alliance of economic reformers who, since a conference organised by F A Hayek in 1947 in Switzerland, had undertaken 'almost three decades of patient, flexible political work' in the attempt to bring into place what is now known as 'New Right' principles and policies (p 78). Across the industrialised world, starting in Britain and the USA, these principles and policies became (and remain at the time of writing) the framework for government.

Although the notion of the economy as a naturally self-regulating system persists, it is the *global* economy that is now seen in this way. Because the natural growth of the international system does not necessarily entail benefits for any one national economy, notions of what is required to foster local economies have changed radically (Hindess 1998: 221). The emphasis is now on making national economies more efficient so that they do not get left behind: 'governments must aim to do better than their competitors, or at least to keep up with the pack' (p 222). More bluntly: '...the only way to avoid becoming a loser — whether as a nation, firm or individual — is to be as competitive as possible' (Hirst & Thompson 1996: 6, cited in Hindess 1998: 212).

This competitive imperative has fundamentally altered the relation between the economy and other parts of social life:

> In place of the image of a well-ordered national economy providing resources for the national state and society we now find the image of the extravagant state and society undermining efficient national economic performance... The pursuit of national economic security now seems to require that an overwhelming priority be placed on competitive economic efficiency. As a result, anything (welfare, health services, schooling and higher education) which might seem to have a bearing on economic life is assessed not only in terms of the availability of resources, but also in terms of their consequences for promoting or inhibiting the pursuit of national economic efficiency. ...the concern is not simply to save money but also to promote more efficient patterns of individual and organisational behaviour by bringing market-relationships into what had once been regarded as non-market spheres of allocation. (Hindess 1998: 223)[9]

Centring social life on market relationships has profound implications for individual subjectivities. According to Miller and Rose (1993: 101), 'the vocabulary of enterprise' has become central to a whole range of 'techniques for the governing of the subject':

> In these programs, the world of the enterprise is reconceptualized as one in which productivity is to be enhanced, quality assured and innovation fostered through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of the employee from the lowliest worker to the highest manager, aligning personal desires with the objectives of the firm. ...Work is an essential element in the path to self-realisation. There is no longer any barrier between the economic, the psychological and the social. The government of work now passes through the psychological strivings of each and every individual for fulfilment.

The consensus alliance engendered new policy-making and implementation hierarchies. Decisions and recommendations to cabinet were made in peak bodies containing representatives from national organisations deemed to be key policy stakeholders: business, trade unions, social service providers, and Commonwealth and state/territory political and bureaucratic managers. Their decisions were given implementable form in subcommittees and working parties whose composition also reflected these stakeholders. These structures provided the grounds for the Labor government's claims to both strong leadership and consensual policy-making.

The pursuit of competitive economic efficiency was taken up by these new bodies in policies directed to privatisation, removing tariffs and farm subsidies, and relaxing controls on overseas investment. Income tax reduction, as in Britain and the United Kingdom, sought to liberate group and individual initiative and productivity. In the public sector, new organisational methods for the delivery of public services laid claim to following '"leading edge" business practices that emphasised 'competition, market incentives and negotiation' (Marginson 1997a: 89). These practices also set in place new forms of management:

> Centrally regulated planning program budgeting product definition, output measurement and cost control were coupled to system of local managers with operational autonomy, tethered to the centre by accountability protocols. (Marginson 1997a: 89)

In academic circles, the new structures and procedures became known as 'corporate managerialism' (Considine 1988; Marginson 1997a; Yeatman 1990). Lingard, Knight & Porter describe policy-making as 'a game played primarily inside the state and its peak organisations' (1993: viii).[10] Yeatman using Beilharz (1987) describes Labor's policies as constructed in 'the discourse of labourism', which represented the natural sources of policy as lying with the interests and understandings of government, employers, and workers as expressed through trade unions (Yeatman 1990: 158). Those groupings or individuals who were not named as partners in the national consensus, for example, immigrant organisations, became 'objects' of policy intervention (the 'disadvantaged') and their own ways of naming themselves, understanding their realities, and staking their claims lost the legitimacy they had gained under both previous Labor and Liberal-National governments (Yeatman 1990: 158). These changes reflected the inevitability that consensus politics could not avoid giving political power and influence to some while denying it to others.

Education and economic restructuring

In 1987, John Dawkins became Minister of a reconstituted and enlarged Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). He was an ambitious proponent of economic restructuring and sought to place education at centre-stage. His intentions had been announced (with grand optimism) in an early policy paper (Dawkins & Costello 1983: 68, cited in Lingard et al 1995: 44), jointly authored with a prominent trade union official:

> ...these two great themes, the need to take control of our own economic destiny and the need to give expression to our vision of a just and equal society provide the settings in which the education policies of the federal Labor government have been conceived. By their very nature, these objectives require of the Labor government that it provides new forms of national leadership in education. This is a task which goes beyond the provision of grants of money to schools, school authorities and tertiary institutions. It requires the national government to be concerned with the objectives of education and the structures through which it is provided and with the adequacy of our total educational efforts.

Exerting the necessary national leadership required the cooperation of the eight states/territories. These are dependent for transfer grants on the federal government (which has almost exclusive rights of taxation) but jealously guard their constitutional authority over all non-university education. Corporate managerial strategies were utilised to seek their cooperation. Previous semi-autonomous policy-making and advisory bodies that reported to the federal education minister were abolished. The Australian Education Council (AEC), which consisted of the Commonwealth and state/territory education ministers and chief executive officers of state/territory education authorities, was re-invigorated as the apex of a pyramid of new committees, councils and working parties whose membership reflected the consensual alliance (Lingard et al 1995). Business and trade union representatives were given the chairs of key groups.

For the policy-makers within the AEC representative structures, economic restructuring required new definitions of skills, educational content relevant to industry-defined needs, and accountability. The emphasis was on outcomes. Outcomes took specific form as 'competencies'. 'Competencies' were defined as 'what a person can do, rather than how long they spend in training' (the latter was described as 'inputs') (Education and Skills Formation Council 1992: 8). They provided an educational construct that could bridge the understandings of those accommodated within the AEC's structures. Apparently commonsensical and transparent, they invited consensus on how educational outcomes might be directed towards economic restructuring.[11] Definitions of competencies became the edifice for bringing the education system within this macro-policy:[12]

> Through competency based reform in education, aligned to new skill standards in each industry and new training-based work classifications, it was hoped to use the technologies of standards, assessment and reporting to secure closer control over education and its outcomes, establishing accountability to industry through its involvement in standards design, and to define outcomes in product terms. It was also hoped to use competency based standards as the 'currency' of credentials, in the modernisation of articulation, pathways and credit transfer between TAFE [technical and further education], schools and higher education. The orientation to work and economy conferred on the competency movement a broad appeal. It provided education–work links that were simple in design, transparent in form, and commonsensical in purpose (Norris 1991). (Marginson 1997a: 174)

Defined in terms of generic skills, competencies also brought group and individual behaviours within this policy ambit:

> The notion of generic skills tended to conceal the specific requirements of different sites and occupations, and placed pressure on the individual graduate/employees to manage their own adjustment. In that sense, the use of generic vocational skill descriptors was...consistent with a buyer's labour market, in which the scarcity of work ensured that people were forced to be flexible and responsive in the face of any and every possible opportunity, able and willing to work across a range of fields. ...Theoretically, it became possible to govern *all* educational programs in terms of vocational objectives. 'Generic skills' were a formula for producing all citizens as economic citizens. (Marginson 1997a: 172)

In 1989, the National Training Agenda for vocational education (the policy domain that came to define adult ESL) was launched through the AEC structures. This agenda was implemented through a complex ensemble of interlocking institutions and procedures. Authorised by the accords, the Australian Standards Framework set out a general rubric by which competency standards for employment and career paths in all industries could be specified. By 1995, standards had been developed for over half the workforce (Curtain & Hayton 1995: 207) and almost all professions (Gonczi 1994: 27). The same rubric was adopted for approving educational programs in the non-university sector by national and state/territory course accreditation bodies. These bodies' jurisdiction was extended through DEET effectively restricting its special purpose funding (a major source of income for colleges and other institutions) to accredited courses. At the same time, new DEET accountability procedures required

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program outcomes to be described in terms of student achievement of competencies.

Paradoxically perhaps, governing in the name of consensus highlighted what Hindess (1997b: 266) describes as the problem of factions:

> ...the attempt to secure popular government from the corrupting effects of certain kinds of faction provides the conditions in which other powerful forms of factional corruption can be expected to take root. A liberal government may well be concerned to defend the conduct of government against the impact of faction — but, since any government will be corrupted by faction, it will also seek to mobilise that concern for factional purposes.

In this respect, the new structures allowed the Minister and his bureaucratic and political advisers more direct involvement in educational policy-making than previously. This involvement also required them to actively mobilise support among other players to establish their agendas and deal with potential counter-alliances in the various policy-making committees (see Lingard et al 1995 for an account of politics within the AEC). To educators caught up in or excluded from these processes, it seemed that educational concerns had become politicised in new ways.

The AMEP

The AMEP traces its origins to the first English classes in a migrant hostel in 1948, three years after the launch of Australia's post-war mass immigration policy (Martin 1999). The twin goals of meeting immigrants' initial settlement and English language requirements contained incipient tensions, evidenced by switches in administration of these classes between the then Commonwealth Office of Education and various incarnations of the department responsible for immigration (henceforth 'Immigration') (Martin 1999).[13] In 1977, the latter's brief was extended to include 'Ethnic Affairs' (that is, immigrant integration) and the AMEP was again relocated to Immigration (Martin 1999: 16), where, at the time of writing, it appears likely to continue as part of this department's 'settlement' mandate.

In 1951, an agreement (which lasted until 1993) was struck between the Commonwealth and states that further illustrated the education-settlement tension. The states were to deliver the program, conditional on the Commonwealth providing reimbursement for expenditures and overall program direction (Martin 1999: 8). Since delivery entailed teacher employment, the program was located within state structures responsible for education, generally post-school. In New South Wales and Victoria (the states with larger populations and high immigrant intakes), distinct organisations known as Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) were created but in most smaller states/territories those delivering the program had less distinct identities.[14]

Although arrangements were complex, Martin (1999: 26) notes that:

> No other educational program had developed...[such a] strong sense of partnership between providers and Commonwealth managers. The relatively

> small size of the program, its administration within the Department of Immigration, and the commitment of all personnel in the AMEP to the program's objectives ensured that information was collected, shared and discussed by all levels of management.

This sense of educational purpose went undisrupted by the false assumption — maintained by Commonwealth and state/territory governments and their bureaucracies — that adult immigrants' needs for ESL tuition were short-term and could be met during their initial 'settlement' process. However, as immigration continued, the extent of ESL requirements became evident and the so-called backlog of unmet needs escalated. Classes were open to all adult ESL learners and contained many beyond the initial settlement phase. Even from the beginning, longer term needs were partially recognised by the creation of a correspondence course. Other programs directed to these needs included classes in industrial settings (begun in 1959); the Home Tutor Scheme (begun in 1973); Migrant Education television programs (begun in 1977); and special courses for those such as people seeking professional employment and/or further study (begun in the late 1970s on university campuses), young adults with disrupted schooling and the aged (begun in the 1980s) (Martin 1999).

In 1978, the *Review of migrant programs and services* (Galbally 1978) marked a watershed in acknowledging that ESL requirements last beyond the first months or years of an immigrant's arrival, that new arrivals are not necessarily beginners in English and that recurrent funding was essential to adequate planning and provision. The review placed the AMEP on a triennially funded basis and established ESL for both adults and children as an on-going policy concern. The AMEP's budget increased from $11.732 million in 1977–78 to $32.24 million in 1981–82 and $71.573 million by 1989–90. Stable funding transformed the program from an educational backwater into a professionalised program capable of meeting a diversity of ESL needs. Professionalism entailed teacher permanency, ESL qualification requirements, a career structure, in-house professional development and special purpose materials. In 1988, Immigration and national research funding established a research and development centre, including a publishing house, at Macquarie University. As the Minister indicated, the AMEP became an exemplar in ESL provision both nationally and internationally.

The Galbally review was one of 26 reports listed by Martin (1999) that, in one way or another, subjected the AMEP to scrutiny from its beginnings to the end of the 1980s (pp 39–40). At the same time, Immigration adopted increasingly sophisticated approaches to data collection and reporting. By the late 1980s, a computerised national information management system (linked from individual centres to Immigration) tracked students according to demographic and linguistic backgrounds, entry and exit assessments — using the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPR) (Wylie & Ingram 1995),[15] courses undertaken, subsequent entry to employment or further education, financial support and childcare arrangements

(Sturgess 1996). The database also monitored staff-student ratios and costs per tuition hour. This technology was probably the most comprehensive and sophisticated monitoring of any educational endeavour at any level in Australia, and constituted the largest database on ESL learners in the world.

The status of the AMEP within the overall Immigration department was described in the following terms by one of my interviewees:[16]

> *The Immigration department is essentially an import-export agency. There's a culture there of 'Our focus is on bringing in people and getting rid of a few'. Programs like the AMEP were up there on the side, and left. Now that was an advantage for many years. And it did very well because it was marginal in a sense. They could always use it and say 'Here's our biggest settlement program, isn't it wonderful?' And it wasn't a big department, so [the Department of] Finance didn't zoom in so much on it.*

The AMEP responded quickly to — and in some respects had anticipated — the National Training Agenda (Moore 2001). Building on their own and others' curriculum development work in the AMEP, the professional development unit of New South Wales AMES, produced a competency-based curriculum framework: *Certificates in Spoken and Written English* (Hagan et al 1993) that, in 1991, was among the first courses in the state to be accredited by the new structures. By this time, the pressures on the program that I now describe were clearly in evidence. To protect the program and their employment, AMEP providers in other states/territories moved to adopt the *Certificates in Spoken and Written English* (CSWE) during 1992.

Why was the AMEP targeted for attention?

The AMEP's coherence and stability created the conditions for the excellence that lay in its special purpose materials, research and professional development, qualifications requirements, career structure and high teacher and student morale. But these features — essentially educational in nature — also made it vulnerable. Located in the Immigration department, the AMEP not only lay outside the consensus alliance but was a provocation to one of the main players in that alliance, namely, DEET.

The attack came as a demand for accountability and greater efficiency. The features that constituted the AMEP's excellence were targeted as products of factional self-interest feeding off the 'extravagant state'. As one government officer recounted:

> *Staffing was seen to be overblown, inefficient, not focused on pushing people through or limiting hours, and therefore a hard edge to the teaching that you do. ...The reputation of the AMEP across other government departments was not huge because — and this had never really been required by the government itself, nor had the agencies themselves been focused on what the bureaucrats were interested in — and that is outcomes and demonstrability of the quality of the product. The staff's interest was in the provision of*

> *language learning, which is the educational versus the bureaucratic imperative all the time. That became more sharply focused when the rest of the context of government was saying 'We've got to have accountability. We've got to see what money is being spent for what we're getting out of it'.*

A second government officer saw the AMEP as unwilling to respond to taxpayers' expectations:

> *The reality is that people stop wanting to pay higher and higher taxes to provide more and more services. And so the ones that couldn't make the shift to justify what they did in output terms — the ones who said, 'Look, you know, I'm just doing a fabulous job and just leave us alone to do it' were the ones who got done.*

A third government officer stated these demands even more bluntly:

> *What we were trying to do was to get out of continually reporting simply on inputs into this program. That six million hours were delivered at an average cost of x dollars. Because that's the cheats' and easy way out in education. You've got to get to a point where you say 'Well look, what on earth did you get for that seventy-five million dollars?'.*

Given the on-going scrutiny of the AMEP and its responsiveness to the National Training Agenda just described, this kind of criticism warrants further explanation.

The most obvious comparison with the AMEP regarding efficiency and accountability were ESL courses in the remainder of the post-school sector. These occurred mostly under the aegis of DEET-funded programs such as labour market training, unemployed youth schemes and programs for women. These were delivered by various community agencies and TAFE colleges. Administrators in the various sections of DEET whose programs included ESL had little or no knowledge of provision through other DEET sections. A few ESL courses were also supported at the discretion of individual TAFE colleges using their core funding. In these colleges, ESL was offered in 'compensatory education' or 'communications' departments. In both the colleges and community agencies, ESL could be taught in courses so designated or in mixed adult literacy, remedial and communications classes. The diffusion of ESL through these channels made it impossible to account for ESL tuition outside the AMEP or even to chart its existence.[17]

As with almost all DEET-funded programs, this type of ESL provision lay at the cutting edge of the program 'proliferation' described earlier. These programs were funded from ad hoc federal government initiatives closely related to three year (or less) electoral cycles. Their purpose was to satisfy the ever-present need for promises of solutions to whatever problems dominated the current political landscape.

In contrast to the AMEP, DEET programs' uncertain life spans necessitated short-term contracting (ranging from 6 weeks to 12 months). Contracts were awarded competitively. Since the only stable criterion for program evaluation was per capita cost, this constituted the basis for accountability. Inevitably, the focus was on keeping these costs low. Low per capita costs did not, of course, entail low overall expenditure. The outlay on DEET labour market programs increased from nil in 1975–76 to $319 million in 1982–83 to $464 million in 1991–92 (Marginson 1997a: 170). Marginson notes that this last amount was considerably more than the recurrent funding for the whole TAFE system, which stood at $274 million in 1991–92 (1997a: 169–70). In fact, the TAFE colleges were very dependent on DEET ad hoc funding for much of what they offered.

Although DEET's accountability mechanisms did not monitor quality, basic quality indicators were obvious to students, teachers and provider institutions. Students were rarely sure that programs would run, so frequently applied for multiple courses and/or enrolled in unsuitable courses for fear of missing out. Since providers did not know the outcomes of their bids for funding until the last minute, they could not plan ahead or advertise courses in a timely way. They were often reduced to running classes with small numbers, making up classes inappropriately, and hiring whatever teachers they could find. Since teachers were employed from contract to contract, and since contracts did not contain provision for professional development, it was generally seen as an individual responsibility, and ESL courses were commonly taught by teachers with minimal or no ESL qualifications. Teacher morale was often low. Resources were minimal. Exceptions were dependent on individual TAFE colleges' commitment (with the politics so entailed) to using core funding for ESL.[18]

Placed in this perspective, the focus on the AMEP's inadequacies cannot be read in terms of its failure to be accountable. Rather, its problem was political: its location, organisation, philosophy and students represented alternatives — challenges — to the thinking of the players in the consensus alliance.

The AMEP's vulnerability had four elements. Firstly, as described by one interviewee, its location outside DEET put the program (and its attractive budget) beyond DEET and its Minister's control:

> H: *But why did the spotlight fall on the AMEP and the Immigration department when, as you just said, labour market training and DEET's track record in that area was a thousand times worse than anything Immigration was responsible for?*
>
> G: *It's to do with David and Goliath. And it's to do with purpose, or defined or* **self***-defined purpose. There was in DEET a sort of heroic streak, in my perception, where it was gung-ho, ripper, 'Lets mow down all before us, because here's the New World order'.*[19] *It was a mega-department that had bashed up the old [Commonwealth] Education Department [replaced by DEET in 1987] which was educationally oriented and focused. The employment and training staff saw their department as heroic and having a very hard edge and it was going to save the country. It had a minister who had elements of that about him anyway… Immigration's not as big as DEET. With the really big bucks, you know, there's probably*

less scrutiny. There's an expectation that really big programs will have a bit of a failure rate.

H: *But if you compare the monitoring and the accountability mechanisms of any DEET program with anything that was going in the AMEP, no matter how sloppy or defective, they were a million miles ahead.*

G: *Yes.*

H: *I mean, they had all the computer-based ARMS system by the end of the 1980s.*

G: *Yes.*

H: *They could give you breakdowns on everything under the sun.*

G: *That's right.*

H: *DEET couldn't do that.*

G: *No.*

H: *So why couldn't Immigration say 'Look, you want accountability, you want outcomes. They're in our pockets'?* **And** *why didn't somebody say to DEET 'Produce the same kind of outcomes'?*

G: *Yeah, well I don't know. But the machinery was there. The data was there.*

H: *In Immigration?*

G: *Yes. It wasn't — well, it wasn't pushed forward enough.*

As described by another government officer, the AMEP's 'inwardness' and supposedly overly complex data system was no match for DEET's 'smartness'. DEET officials claimed the right to take over this haven for self-satisfied teachers and managers, a tactic that also deflected criticism from DEET's programs.

G: *There was a really big push…in relation to AMES from Finance on a very laggardly…[Immigration department] for more accountability…*

H: *How were Immigration seen as laggardly?*

G: *They were incredibly inward looking…they dealt with Finance really badly, they couldn't handle it, they gave them sort of half the information about all sorts of things. They made themselves look very bad in terms of outcomes — in comparison to DEET, who were very smart at dealing with Finance. And so they got knocked around every budget time. Everyone kept on reviewing them. DEET kept on undermining them. They were just hopeless.*

H: *So do you think they were not committed to outcomes, or they were just were not up to the job?*

G: *I think, um, they were very very inward looking. They'd run a program that they thought was fantastic for many many years and they were just not very good…I mean, here they had this program where they had more accountability and outcomes than any other program than I had anything to do with in my entire life. And they couldn't convince Finance that they knew what they were doing. Well, they* **didn't** *know what they were doing, so [pause].*

H: *That's fascinating, because… the efficiency of the AMEP in collecting data, it was all on a database in a computer =*

G: *= More outcome data than you could poke a stick at.*

H: *And DEET were hopeless, just hopeless. They didn't have a clue what they were doing.*

G: *But they were smart at the senior level…[Immigration] got* **absolutely crucified** *again and again. But DEET had Dawkins, I can't remember who…[Immigration] had as a minister, but Dawkins was very smart…DEET basically ran their own game and did what they wanted to do, because they were a lot smarter at it.*

Secondly, as described here, Immigration officials seemed unable to present the case for the AMEP. Their difficulty stemmed from the corporate managerial reforms described earlier. According to Yeatman (1990), corporate managerialism instituted a system of top-down controls that rewarded loyalty to management objectives and emphasised management techniques. The system thereby excluded other claims and limited 'the influence of 'content', namely, commitments and loyalties which are tied to particular departmental or agency portfolios and which acquire authority through the development of specialised experience and links with client groups' (p 9). In this process, government officers' commitments to the programs they administered came to be seen as corrupted by factionalism:

G: *There was a policy within Immigration that was developed post '87, that at the senior level, you stayed a maximum of three years in any one position. Someone could well have been sent off to manage the deportation program, regardless of 15 years work with settlement programs.*

H: *People like that became suspect because they had commitments?*

G: *Oh yeah. And more importantly, they had contacts. Great networks, which were a threat. I remember explaining something to my boss and he said 'That's just teacher talk'. …It was a total misunderstanding of what real collaboration was about. My philosophy was always to make sure I got the money out of Finance, make sure I could defend the program, which meant I relied on the states to help me put arguments, represent the program at the Commonwealth level amongst all the other agencies, and show what needed to be done at the national level…getting that sort of national sense there. Keeping the national networks of people going. So you had your workplace coordinators meeting as a group and sharing a lot of information. And allowing the states to get on with it, because they were the employers of the teachers. That was seen as too close a relationship. It wasn't, as I was accused of, enabling the states to control the program. …After 1991, the relationship with the states was the worst ever. All national meetings were cancelled, the lot.*

Thirdly, for the consensus alliance, the AMEP's most immediate beneficiaries — immigrants — were problems, and the policies that supported them suspect.[20] These suspicions were first articulated in the public arena by several academics (notably, Geoffrey Blainey and Lachlan Chipman) who used the mass media to criticise immigration policy and multiculturalism. The 1986 Fitzgerald report legitimated these criticisms in its finding that 'views representing hundreds and thousands of Australians' expressed 'confusion and mistrust of multiculturalism [undefined], focusing on the suspicion that it drove immigration policy' (Fitzgerald 1986: xii). The report recommended that immigration should serve national economic interests. By the end of the 1980s, the celebratory multiculturalism that the Whitlam Labor government had initiated in the early 1970s, and its successor Liberal-National coalition government had developed, was seen by the consensus alliance as a form of softheadedness that should be contained if it were not to dangerously undermine economic restructuring.[21] Immigration's credibility was likewise undermined, as a government official explained:

> *Immigration within the context of government departments was seen as confused…and because Immigration's not a big department, and it carries, if you like, the responsibility for migration, for allowing migrants in. At the time, because of dropping employment rates, industry restructuring, problems because of migrant unemployment, somewhere at the back of some heads was this 'And look at Immigration. They're adding to our problems by having this silly migration program. They keep on bringing people in. And they're coming in to what? They're coming into a restructured, downsizing situation that has a lot of unemployment or migrant-background persons in it anyway'. So all of those things were on the boil as well…I got the sense sometimes that Immigration felt embattled, because it was Immigration. And because some of these programs were seen as a bit soft, or a bit wet, or a bit wasteful, or were perhaps opposed or not welcomed in Cabinet. We need to remember that Senator Walsh [the Minister for Finance] thought multiculturalism was anathema. He said so quite loudly. And Senator Graham Richardson [the Minister for Social Security] was expressing deep concern about the draw of migrants on Social Security. Millions.*

Lastly, far from being defective, the AMEP's comprehensive accountability mechanisms provided the evidence for attack. The AMEP documented whom it served (including breakdowns of particular groups), how, and at what cost. Even more explosively, Immigration provided relatively soundly based projections of unmet ESL needs. As a government official explained, this information made immigrants' draw on 'the extravagant state' seem intolerable:

> *DEET kept pulling this line that we're not interested in people as migrants as such, only with those who are out of work. But they didn't really know how many people in labour market programs were getting ESL. To force the issue,*

> *the National Plan [for 1990–92] came out. The benefit of that was that at least it provided a bit of rigour with objectives, indicators and targets, standards. It was designed to force DEET into acceptance of responsibility, saying this is the pathway for people through the AMEP and on to DEET programs. DEET claimed they were never consulted about it, which was nonsense. They were on the committee but they had a different person for every committee meeting. And so that actually led to the Post-secondary Report [1990], which quantified what the real cost of it all would be, and that obviously freaked DEET out. …The Report, and the National Plan as well, for the first time ever worked out for different cohorts of people how long it would take to learn English, and therefore what the resource implications were. So any shifts in the immigration program, all those flow-on costs for ESL, could then be calculated. And what actually happened was that it wasn't just the ESL cost of $362 million. That was picked up by the Department of Finance, who looked at the flow-on for Medicare, social security etc — no one had ever costed the immigration program. Now Immigration's purpose, of course, was to get more money. Finance's purpose was to say no. And so they were determined from then on, not just to cut down the immigration program, but the non-English speaking component of it, and to start reducing entitlements.*[22]

At the same time as quantifying ESL needs, the National Plan was the first step in Immigration's attempt to protect the AMEP by maintaining control over it. The strategy was to limit the scope of the program and hence its role in state extravagance.

Changes to the AMEP

Immigration's strategy entailed revisiting the settlement–education distinction and defining the AMEP's settlement role in very specific terms. Their compliance with the new governmentality was signalled by applying 'user-pays' and later competition principles to the program.

To protect the new definition, Immigration sought and gained legislative authority. The 1992 Migration Laws Amendment Act restricted entitlements to the AMEP by specifying a tuition entitlement (510 hours = 6 months @ 20 hours per week) to be used in the twelve months following arrival by those assessed on a special purpose test as having less than 'functional English'.[23] The test was administered at overseas posts as part of the visa application process. Test costs were calculated into the visa application fee and, to gain their visa, those entitled to the AMEP were required to prepay tuition fees.[24]

The 510 hour entitlement was decided through a policy-making process described by a government officer as:

> *Someone dreams up a bright idea on the weekend and it becomes policy on Monday morning.*

Another commented:

> *The 10 on the end sounded really quite scientific. 500 would have looked just a bit too neat.* **That** *was the thing. Marvellous. I mean this is how sometimes government policy — you create it, you know? Someone says something, and all of a sudden it gets a head of steam and, ah, whoops, it's blessed.*

A third elaborated:

> *G: The 510 hours figure was bizarre. …Their justification was that the post-secondary ESL report came up with some figures which said, on average, people receive something like 360 hours, and on average, people reach ASLPR 1+ [that is, 'transactional proficiency', Wylie & Ingram 1995: iv]. So they mucked around with those figures and came to 510 to reach ASLPR 2 [that is, 'basic social proficiency', Wylie & Ingram 1995: iv]. But there were a few minor statistical problems with that…first of all, they were talking about an average for people who'd been in Australia from 0–5 years but this was being applied to 0–1 years. And the data was very questionable because the database was only in its early days, and there were a lot of data entry problems. In fact, six months afterwards all the data was cleaned, in the proper sense of dropping out those people whose names appeared twice and that type of thing. There were just a lot of errors basically. And yet even though that was put to them at the time, they still kept it because it would have been losing face to back down from the 510 hours figure. The reason why there was an average of 300 odd hours to get to ASLPR 1+ was because of resource restrictions, where people had been in the program for so many weeks and then pushed out. It wasn't because that's how long it took to learn. Also people had come in at different levels. So it was meaningless. But that nicely fitted the resources available.*
>
> *H: Who's the 'they' who decided the 510 hours?*
>
> *G: People in Immigration who had to put a figure to Finance for budgeting purposes. Now, I don't mind about figures being used for that, as long as they're accurate. Because you've got a budget, and you've got to know roughly, if you're going to get, you know, 10,000 new concessional migrants who are primarily elderly people from South East Asia, that approximately they'll need so many hours each. You've got to have some measure. Well, what they did was translated that into an entitlement. I mean it's a lovely myth. It was going backwards because they'd put up so many other barriers to people getting courses in the first place.*
>
> *H: And this was in Immigration, not DEET.*
>
> *G: It was within Immigration with the concurrence of DEET, and with Finance standing over both of them.*

Although the 510 hour tuition limit resolved the problem of defining the AMEP's scope as a settlement program, it aggravated criticism of its 'outcomes'. Outcomes were commonsensically centred on learner gains in courses, that is, they relied on educational measures. The benchmark for exiting the AMEP was defined at ASLPR level 2 (that is, 'functional English'). It did not take long for the deceptive circular logic that had produced the 510 hour limit to be revealed, since beginners actually required longer tuition periods to achieve this level than the AMEP now permitted. This problem was described as follows:

> *There was an expectation, as a result of the introduction of 510 hours, that our clients should all be able to get to functional English [that is, ASLPR level 2] within 510 hours, and, of course, the disappointment started to emerge, that the AMEP, as a program, is set up to fail. How could you set a benchmark of functional English and only 17 per cent of your clients get there within the entitlement that they've got?*

The problem was resolved by utilising the competency-based curriculum and assessment framework that had been developed by New South Wales AMES. This move had a double advantage. It officially aligned the AMEP within the National Training Agenda. It also took the focus of accountability off the learner's gains in general English proficiency and placed it on achievement in specific AMEP courses. This was explained as follows:

> *What we needed to do was try and recognize the gains that people* ***were*** *making in the AMEP, and the only way we could do that really was to end up with a much more refined way of measuring outcomes.... My view was that we had to bring the AMEP into the 1990s, and measure client outcomes based on competency. And when you look at the structure of CSWE, and indeed other competency frameworks, it gives you the opportunity to look very closely at what clients achieve whilst they're in the program, in terms of competencies and certificates.*

In 1995, Immigration decided that delivery of the AMEP (for 1998–2002) would be through competitive contracting with public and private sector agencies.[25] A condition of these contracts was use of CSWE. Although this framework was very different in content and form from the set text used until the late 1970s (*Situational English*), the move was a return to centrally devised and bureaucratically prescribed curriculum. This uniformity was necessary to achieve comparable accountability measures across the program:

> *H: So you're not at all sympathetic to the view that a thousand flowers should bloom and we should have different curricula?*
>
> *G: Not at this stage.*
>
> *H: No?*
>
> *G: The only reason I'm not sympathetic to that view is that the AMEP is being put to public tender [that is, contract] right now. And what we've decided is that, in terms of putting it to tender, we want to be very, very careful. And in the first round of tenders we are specifying CSWE so we've got comparability of pre- and post-tender.*

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> H: *In what sense?*
>
> G: *In the sense that, with the outcomes we were getting prior to tendering and the language outcomes we'll get post-tendering, we want to make sure the baseline comparisons are there.*

These accountability measures had now become more necessary than ever, since competition, which made existing AMEP providers potential rivals for subsequent contracts, ruled out the cooperative management of the program described earlier.[26]

In the initial period of these developments, and in response to escalating unemployment and the 1991 recession, DEET received substantive increases to its labour market training budget. The high point was 1994, when the budget for DEET's Special Intervention Program, the bulk of which was ESL, stood at $280 million.[27] Although DEET was now the main source of funding for ESL, no commitment or provision was made to separately designate ESL. The transfer to DEET of the AMEP's English in the Workplace program was described by one interviewee as:

> *…an interesting first example of programs what would be likely to happen to programs that were not disaggregated or kept separate — they were run over and mixed up with literacy. So you had much more general blancmangey sort of courses.*

DEET contracts were awarded to AMESs, TAFE colleges, universities and private entrepreneurs. Although these contracts more than compensated providers for the cutbacks in AMEP funding, at least in the short term, knowledge that they *were* short-term undercut teacher employment and career paths. Divisiveness grew between existing permanent staff and newly recruited contract teachers. Divisiveness also replaced cooperation between providers, as competitive contracting eliminated student referrals and informal agreements on who would offer different types of course. This transition period was described by one government officer as follows:

> *That first year [1992] it was an* **absolute** *shemozzle, students not knowing whether they were in or out, referrals were a mess, the contracting process was an absolute mess, 10 week courses that type of thing. Then it was made worse in the 1992 budget when they decided they'd limit the AMEP to the 510 hours. …The 1992 budget fixed it as an entitlement and that became a giant administrative mess. There was a lot of hostility between the states and the Commonwealth by then, because of the scrapping of the Commonwealth–state agreements. What they eventually introduced was The Australian Language and Literacy Policy's annual operational plans. It took a year to negotiate those, so there was a whole year of almost inaction. Parallel to that,…[Immigration] decided to get rid of the existing information system, so-called upgrading. It cost $6 million and it still hasn't worked. …And I think from that 1992 budget to what is it now, September 1994, it's only now starting to shake itself out, having lost specialist expertise — they went into other areas of the department. Suddenly there was no one in charge, there was*

> *anarchy. In fact...last year...[Immigration] underspent by $27 million because they'd developed this whole operational plan of indicators but no system of collecting information — their whole information system design was a mess.*[28]

From the provider perspective, once the dust had settled, the new situation resolved the settlement-education tension but at some cost to traditional educational assumptions. As summed up by a state-level AMES administrator:

> *The major change has come with the reinterpretation of the role of language and literacy...which made that link to national training outcomes. On the one hand that was good for us, because it meant that for the first time we were now no longer an odd appendage to the Immigration department or a branch of its Settlement Program, but we were where most people like us were, and that was in an employment and training area. It's been both our great advantage and disadvantage for 40 years to have been separate. By being separate, things have been able to grow in a certain way. We haven't suffered what happened to child ESL, being decimated in the '80s. On the other hand, it meant we were sort of cut off and now we're paying the price for it...The practical and symbolic change was...[Immigration's] reduction of its role in settlement and DEET's increasing responsibility for ESL funding, because ESL was seen as a training issue. This is what broke the symbiotic relationship between AMES and the AMEP, because now we had to see the AMEP as* **one** *of the services we provided, that...[Immigration], in effect, bought from us, as is also the case with DEET. It's a classic example of the change in governments' views of how services should be provided, from providing services to buying services. So we are now a registered private provider of educational training. We still have a relationship with the AMEP that reflects our history. But as far as DEET is concerned, we're just one of a number of people who bids to offer services to them. ...A lot of the struggle is now to be able to achieve that quality of work, that collaborative style of work, in an environment that discourages it, where collaboration is seen as collusion — and yet, at the same time, ironically, there's calls for strategic alliances.* **No** *individual institution, for example, would* **dare** *apply to do a project any more. You've got to have three or four institutions joined together. No single group would get anything. ...One of the major juggling acts at the moment is trying to maintain that kind of confederation that* **is** *the organisation without it all falling apart and becoming a kind of commonwealth of soviet states. There's a real risk it will go down that path.*

DEET's lead role in funding ESL courses was short-lived. In 1996, one of the first acts of the incoming Liberal-National government was to abolish labour market training programs, seen as an inefficient Labor extravagance. Legislative protection of the 510 hours AMEP entitlement made that program, once again, the major source of adult ESL provision.[29]

From Immigration's perspective, the new situation yielded a clarity previously lacking. Their responsibility for meeting ESL needs was now strictly defined. The 'backlog' was no longer their concern, nor was the long-term erosion of immigrants' access to quality ESL provision. As summed up by one government officer:

> *G: What distinguished the AMEP over those earlier years, I suppose, was the stability of persons at the agency level, and pretty much the same at the national bureaucratic level. Some would say that produced a great cosiness. And I think in many instances it did. But in the last few years, that broke. It became slightly more formal, more distant…and that I think has been quite useful, quite positive. Because it allowed each side to say 'No, we can demonstrate, we can produce'. The separation and the distance came with the shift to the base of the program and the 510 hours. All that broke apart the interpersonal cosiness that might have been seen to exist. So I think that's improved the setting.*
>
> *H: The breaking?*
>
> *G: Oh yes. I think it's improved. It's sharpened the idea of what the whole thing is about, or ought to be about, more so than another method might have done. Because the whole shift has forced an answering of the question 'What do you want?' and 'What are we supposed to be doing?'. The AMEP for many years was the lot, thanks very much, social work, English language teaching, nice relations with the Commonwealth, anything you like. The narrowing of focus, I mean this classic stuff — purchaser, provider, using the lexicon of all the holy bits these days — 'We, the purchaser, say what we want you to provide. You as a provider provide it.' We exchange money and we change the habits and stuff as we go.*
>
> *H: And you reckon you can still do that and maintain an effective program?*
>
> *G: It's entirely dependent on what you call an effective program. From a government perspective, from a departmental perspective, from a manager's perspective, I would say, if I'm seeing more people walk through the AMEP, and their language learning outcome is scoreable to show that they got more when they came out than they had when they went in, and they're appropriately charted in terms of their starting point and their finishing point — were they slow learners? fast track? etc etc. …**And** if they can then move on and demonstrate that they were able to pick up the next phase, I would say 'OK, that's good. That's a good program. Because it's got a movement, it's got dynamism in it. It's producing people who are capable of walking in a straight line and who can communicate, we think, and become semi-autonomous'. I'm not sure that that was **chartable** before. It happened. Of course, it happened. But I don't think there was a capacity to say 'There it is. I can lay it out before you'.*

Answers may have been in place regarding the AMEP, but after 1996 the substantive question of what happened to ESL learners outside the AMEP remained unanswered. Who might ask — much less answer — that question was even less clear. DEET's interests now lay with other initiatives, in so far as these were possible in the cutbacks and radical reorganisation it faced under the new government. As summed up by a DEET government officer: 'The Commonwealth's interest in specific elements of the adult ESL and literacy field may, in fact, no longer be relevant'.

Conclusion

Dorothy Smith speaks of governmental texts as 'having no apparent history other than the one incorporated' in them (1990: 74). Ahistoricity and historical revisionism are inherent in policy proliferation and promises of ever-better methods of governance. Policy's urgent demands for action quickly erase memories, as my interviews exemplify. For the makers and implementers of policy to reflect on what is lost by abandoning existing programs in pursuit of new ones would invite Lady Macbeth's warning: 'These deeds must not be thought of after these ways: so, it will make us mad' (Macbeth, Act 2, Scene 2, lines 33–4).

For observers in the academy, this kind of thinking is a challenge rather than a risk. In this lies academics' distinctive contribution to policy-making. In my case, I hope my observations enlarge the possibilities for understanding the changes that my interviewees and I experienced. As my epigraph suggests, these changes surprised many of us, I think, and their unravelling was not a little by chance.

Although Labor's economic restructuring alliance is now in history's dustbowl, their programs were anything but failing. Quite the reverse. They succeeded admirably in creating a new enterprise mode of governance — a governmentality, as Foucault would say, of institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics — that, by the end of the 1990s, was taken for granted by Australian politicians, government officers, administrators and educators.

In my activist (as distinct from observer) role, I find this reworking of the AMEP to be a hollowing out of the social goals the Immigration Minister celebrated: nation-building, immigrant settlement and cultural diversity. But although, for activists, remembering possibilities foregone invites cynicism, if not madness, understanding how this has happened may yet offer some way forward.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 The aphorism on which my title is based ('If it ain't broke, why fix it?') was used by the successful 'no' side in the 1999 referendum on Australia becoming a republic. My analysis here suggests that this maxim has little carriage in actual policy-making.

2 See also a special issue of the journal *Prospect,* 13, 3, 1998.

3 Whether state authorities attend to *actual* research results is quite another question (Allington & Woodside-Jiron 1999).

4 This kind of difficulty need not occur (although it can) when the project is not state-sponsored. The individuals whose interviews are utilised in this chapter exemplify bureaucratic tolerance of and, indeed, valued assistance in a project directed to academic observation.

5 Policy-makers are rarely explicit about this process. However, the Education Minister in the new 1995 Progressive Conservative Ontario Provincial Government in Canada (elected to implement a 'Common Sense Revolution') was an unwittingly helpful exception. The notes from a July 1995 meeting between the Minister and senior government officers were reported in the press as follows:

Question:	Do we bankrupt the ministry before positive change can occur? (Laughter) I'm waiting.
Mr Snobelen [the Minister]:	So am I. (Laughter) In my opinion, yes...If we really want to fundamentally change the issue in training and...education, we'll have to first make sure we've communicated brilliantly the breakdown in the process we currently experience. That's not easy. We need to invent a crisis. (*Globe and Mail,* 3 Oct 1995: A19)

6 See Moore (2001) for a beginning of this exploration.

7 Australia is a federation consisting of six states and two territories. The discussion in this section relates to the federal government, known as the 'Commonwealth' government. There are three main parties that contest for government: the Australian Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the National Party (formerly the Country Party). The latter two operate as a coalition at the federal level.

8 The crisis occurred when the conservative-dominated federal upper house (the Senate) refused the Labor government's budget and the Governor-General sacked the Prime Minister, installing a caretaker government to call a general election.

9 See also Marginson (1997a).

10 Prime Minister Bob Hawke was committed to the consensus alliance but also prided himself on his ability to communicate directly with the public. To the annoyance of his colleagues, he was not beyond going outside these bodies to take advice and make decisions.

11 See Jones and Moore (1993) for an extended elaboration of this point in the British context.

12 See Moore (1996) for an analysis of the effects of these developments on ESL curriculum and assessment resources for schools.

13 The actual names of the department have varied reflecting interesting shifts in governmentality: Immigration (1945–74); Labour and Immigration (1974–75); Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1988); Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (1988–96); Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1996–) (Martin 1999: viii)

14 In 1984, the Adult Migrant *Education* Program became the Adult Migrant *English* Program (Martin 1999: 174), a change that also reflected this same tension. AMES NSW changed from *Education to English* in 1991. AMES Victoria made the same change in the 1980s but in 1997, to reflect its educational provider status (see below) became Adult *Multicultural Education* Services (Martin 1999: vi).

15 Whether or not the ASLPR was deficient is irrelevant to this point (and was, in fact, a matter of some debate in my data).

16 The interview material that follows comes mainly from four government officers connected to the program, with supplementary extracts from two other interviewees.

In presenting extracts from interviews, I have edited transcripts to include punctuation and eliminate repetitions, grammatical infelicities and pauses unless these seemed to be significant. The conventions used are as follows:

...	one or more words deleted
bold	emphasis by the speaker
[ ]	editorial comment/correction by me
=	speech interrupted by next speaker

17 DEET's *Australia's language: The Australian language and literacy policy* (1991) and its administering body, the Language and Literacy section, was developed to overcome this problem. However, both the policy and its administrators had as a cornerstone the incorporation of ESL (including the AMEP) within 'language and literacy'. In regard to actual program delivery, the inability to chart ESL remained.

18 These observations are based on my own 17 year experience of dealing with DEET-funded institutions in Victoria as a teacher educator and program administrator, and the on-going corroboration provided by students and colleagues.

19 As a DEET government officer put it: 'You need a sense of vision. I don't think we had that sense of vision at officer level in ... [Immigration]'.

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20 Minister Dawkins also described immigrants' problems with English as undermining their participation in Australian democracy (Dawkins, 1991: 1).

21 Containment of multiculturalism was attempted in the 1989 policy paper *The national agenda for a multicultural Australia* (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989).

22 As the interviewee later pointed out, the projected ESL costings were small compared to other budgets, such as the computer budgets for the Department of Defence (approximately $900 million a year) and DEET ($180 million). Immigrants' contribution to tax revenues were also ignored. This comment was concluded with the observation that 'it's easier to hit soft targets'.

23 This was entitled the Australian Assessment of Communicative Skills (ACCESS) test.

24 In 1996, the fee was $4,000 for the main applicant and $2,000 for each dependent. Fees were not levied on refugees.

25 This move was first attempted in 1990 but was defeated by overwhelming negative reactions from within and beyond the Commonwealth-state cooperative structures of the time (Martin 1999: 31).

26 Program coherence was now maintained through Immigration's own program management and the work of the research and development body funded by Immigration.

27 Since DEET-funded programs now contained high numbers of ESL students, an achievement measure that could be used with both native and non-native English speakers in separate and mixed adult literacy and ESL classes was required. This was developed through two projects at a cost of approximately $650,000.

28 Upgrading the information system was necessary because the old system could not track the 510 hour entitlement. These problems were not ironed out until 1995. The underspending was due to the decreased numbers accessing the AMEP.

29 In 1998 some DEET-funded ESL reappeared under the aegis of a Literacy and Numeracy program for 18 to 24-year-old job seekers.

Part 3

Policy positions

5 Advocating the sustainability of linguistic diversity

Michael Singh

Introduction

Languages form the means for human communication, and require a community to speak and transmit them in order to be sustained and grow. For communities to exist they need a sustainable social, economic and ecological environment in which to live. Where communities are unable to be sustained, their languages become endangered; when people no longer speak their language they die. The loss of linguistic diversity is caused by social stresses arising from environmental, economic or political changes that deny communities the resources and opportunities required for the intergenerational transmission of languages. Languages also provide the global economy with the rich cultural resources of the accumulated knowledges of humanity. In the global knowledge economy where linguistic diversity is the norm bilingualism has a competitive advantage. Languages are part of the social capital that bilingual Australians can draw upon to increase the productive value of their contributions to securing the nation's competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Further, languages also play an important part in the ongoing processes of remaking a nation's identity, giving vitality to the uncertainties and struggles over a nation's identity. The movement and mixture of peoples are integral to establishing egalitarian multilingualism as a representation and project of Australian identity formation and nation-building.

Policy activism around Australian language education has dogged connections with issues of immigration, multiculturalism, Asia–Australia relations and national identity. This chapter explores the interactions between language education policies and these issues and their refractions across four decades. Beginning with the symbolic and substantive changes initiated in the late 1950s that were made in restrictions on the provision of education to settlers who spoke languages othered by English, it moves through to the Galbally review (1978) and then to the Roach report

(Roach 1999). I argue that there are similarities in these policies across this period regarding their silence over the continuing problems of White Australia politics (Singh 1999). I use the concept of 'White Australia politics' in acknowledgment of the effect that nineteenth century colonialist thinking continues to have on Australia's language education policies.

The 'end' of White Australia politics has been mythologised as a single, once-and-forever event that occurred sometime between the late 1950s and the early 1970s. However, once the racist restrictions on immigration were formally declared to be over, new arrivals found that the cultural power of White Australia politics instituted novel restrictions that maintained modified patterns of Anglo-fundamentalist domination. The end of the anti-Asian 'populate or perish' immigration program (1947–73) initiated the beginnings of a new round of struggles to elaborate the distinctive meanings of Australian cosmopolitics and to mitigate the power of White Australia politics. In the struggles over who could make the nation's language education policies, Anglo-fundamentalists sought to protect their privileged policy-making interests within the institutions of White Australia politics. They pursued their desires to control the language policy agenda and resisted the desires of bilingual Australians to contribute to the nation's policy-making efforts.

Ending the language policy deficit?

To create an Australian consciousness among the newly arrived settlers recruited under the anti-Asian 'populate or perish' immigration program, the government formalised the teaching of the national language. The Commonwealth government began funding the English language education of adult migrant speakers of other languages in 1947 in order to realise its peculiar goal of monolingualism. Then as now 'monolingual English speakers are usually unaware of the fact that their circumstances are NOT the norm in a world that has long been and is still predominantly multilingual' (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 18). The provision of English language education for immigrant children did not start until 1970 (Martin 1978). Until then schools were charged with ensuring the cultural assimilation of migrant children from continental Europe, that is, with ensuring that they became every bit like – but inevitably not quite – their Anglo-ethnic peers. The 'picking up' of English by these migrant children (others had of course come from England speaking British Englishes) was regarded as necessary to resolve the insurmountable problem of producing sameness in a nation where none existed. This problem arose around disputes over what counts as the same and what counts as different. Even among the Anglo-ethnic diaspora conflicts over class, gender, sexual, regional, linguistic and religious differences made the project of enforcing sameness fragile, if not implausible (Gilroy 2000: 109). Teachers were not specifically trained to work with these immigrant children nor were there appropriate teaching materials. It was expected that these children would be accommodated without any changes to existing teaching practices or reorganisation of education systems or their structures. Echoes of this perspective are to be found in contemporary debates over the internationalisation of Australian education.

Teachers were key activists engaged in efforts to redress the policy deficits that created the failure to meet the educational needs of these migrant children. For much of the 1950s and 1960s European migrant children were constructed as 'handicapped', 'backward', 'retarded' or 'slow-learners', and their presence in school was met with ad hoc adaptations. Their parents were also constructed as problems, partly because of their employment as unskilled and semiskilled shift workers. However, a major objection to these parents was their insistence on their children speaking their first language at home and having them attend after-school language classes. Parents know that the viability of their language lies in intergenerational transmission at home and in other domains: 'Languages are at risk where they are no longer transmitted naturally to children in the home by parents or other caretakers' (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 8). This resistance to the pedagogy and politics of English-only directly conflicted with the doctrine of White Australia politics which Anglo-ethnic teachers had to or wanted to enforce.

In 1954 the Victorian Teachers' Union blamed the victims of policy neglect for educational problems. In a divisive move, the Union claimed that migrant children were jeopardising the work of teachers and causing the education of Anglo-ethnic children to suffer. By 1958 the Union was arguing for the training of teachers in 'remedial' English and the provision of 'remedial' reading materials to address the needs of migrant children from Europe who were then constructed as having serious 'language handicaps'. Teachers throughout New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory expressed dissatisfaction over the absence of an appropriate English language education policy and the resources it should deliver. Elsewhere educational leaders in schools such as St Leonards (South Australia) and Fitzroy High School (Victoria) developed teacher guidelines and experimented with tutorials in English, specific language-based work assignments, and twelve-week 'crash' courses for students. Reflecting the prevailing negative orientation to languages othered through English the Victorian Education Department and the Victorian Council of School Organisations conducted seminars on 'language deprivation'. Much of the educational research undertaken during this time was misleading and biased. Data were misinterpreted or distorted, and facts were obscured in order to reinforce the power of White Australia's assimilationist, English-only politics (Martin 1978: 98). This misguided political and pedagogical project envisioned a world in which everyone would speak just one language, namely 'global English'. At the very least, the 'elimination of linguistic diversity on such a massive scale would do the evolution of the human mind a great disservice' (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 70).

Policy activists used experimentation, information gathering, lobbying of governments, group discussions and reflection to sharpen their aims and strategies. Despite the policy activism around the needs of European migrant children, education 'administrators succeeded in re-defining the changes that were needed in such a limited way that the necessary adaptations could be made without causing more than a ripple on the surface of the existing system' (Martin 1978: 93). Most state education systems resisted policies that would have them make provisions for addressing the vernacular language education or bilingual education needs of migrant children, arguing that the responsibility for doing so lay with the Commonwealth government. And, of course, the Commonwealth, when faced with representations made by organisations such as the Catholic Church as far back as 1949, argued that policies governing the (language) education of all children were the constitutional responsibility of the states. However, when the Commonwealth found electoral advantage in funding science laboratories and libraries for schools in the 1960s, bilingual community activists, teachers, principals, Good Neighbour Councils, Parents and Citizens Associations and academics mounted new approaches to parliamentarians. In 1970, Billy Snedden, a sympathetic Minister for Immigration, provided the foundations for establishing Commonwealth funding of the Child Migrant Education Program (CMEP) in 1970. Intended as a short-term venture the CMEP set out to provide the staff, training, equipment and resources needed for the teaching of English as a replacement language (ERL) for the vernacular language of European immigrant children.

Lo Bianco (1990: 52) reminds us of the repression of bilingual education, media restrictions on using languages othered by English, the denigration of Australian Indigenous languages, opposition to the use of community languages, and the neglect of educating students in English as a second language. These were all part of the social experiment to fabricate a Whites-only English-only Australia that meant assigning all other languages an inferior status. Throughout the twentieth century nation-states of all ideological dispositions persecuted linguistic minorities and sought to eradicate their languages, if not the people themselves. Mistaken colonialist beliefs about the inferiority of other people's languages have been used to excuse their eradication through being replaced with English. Likewise, English-only politics were grounded in the naive belief that monolingualism secures mutual understanding, peace and solidarity, even though 'all the major monolingual countries of the world have had their civil wars' (Crystal 2000: 27). The decades of policy deficit with respect to sustaining Australia's linguistic diversity represents a refusal to recognise that throughout the world's 200 countries some 6,000 languages are spoken. With there being 30 times more languages than there are countries, this means that bi- and multilingualism are defining features of nearly every nation-state on the planet (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 21, 29).

After a decade of teacher and parent policy activism it was decided to introduce the teaching of English as a replacement language (ERL) to the children of European migrant labour in 1970. The CMEP was initiated as a mechanism for constructing a collectivised Australian identity as well as serving the nation's political interests. ERL programs were seen as a useful contribution to public and political life, being a mechanism for integrating these children into a Whites-only, English-only Australia.

English language education was a key mechanism through which European immigrants were invited, even coerced to imagine themselves as being stereotypical Anglo-ethnics, preferably Anglo-fundamentalist members of the Australian nation-state. ERL programs were to play their part in helping to forge a sense of White, English speaking Australianness; helping to construct a national political consciousness that would link a disparate immigrant population with the dispersed and ambiguous iconography of the ever-changing Australia national identity. The children's first language and their parents' insistence on its value were seen as interferences in their ability to acquire English and Australianness. It was not until 1986 that Victoria abolished legislation prohibiting bilingual education (Clyne 1991b).

Crisis over post-arrival programs for postcolonial settlers

In September 1977, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser established a group to review post-arrival programs and services for migrants. In identifying 'areas of need which seem most critical', the review stated that the settlers experiencing the greatest difficulties were those 'migrants who come from countries without a long established tradition of migration to Australia or for those who are refugees' (Galbally 1978: 4). The Galbally review observed that the crisis around initial settlement was due to the complexity of the post-arrival settlement process particularly for those coming from countries where the language was 'different from that dominant in Australia or without a well established ethnic group here' (Galbally 1978: 29). Here the review was specifically referring to those new settlers from Asia, the Middle East and South America, most of whom would have been excluded under the Whites-only Australian Immigration Restriction Act (1901). Under this Act a dictation test, administered in any European language, was used to exclude all non-Europeans.

By the late 1970s, the many non-European immigrants who had begun to arrive from postcolonial nations that had been the objects of north-west European imperial interests, heightened government concern about the yet to be named problem of White Australia politics. It is worth quoting at length from the Galbally review group's account of this crisis (Galbally 1978: 3):

> We believe that Australia is at a critical stage in the development of a cohesive, united multicultural nation. This has come about because of significant changes...in the pattern of migration and in the structure of our population, changes in attitudes to migration and to our responsibilities for international refugees...The pattern of migration has altered in the past six years [that is, 1971–77], with the proportion of migrants from Britain and the other European countries falling from 70 per cent to less than 40 per cent. Meanwhile there has been significantly increased migrations from the Middle East and Asia (including refugees) and more recently from South America...

Here then the Galbally review recognised the dynamics of national identity formation and the importance of movement – the displacement, flight, exile and forced migration of people – to the ongoing remaking of Australian cosmopolitics. It argued that by the late 1970s, in the few years immediately following the end of the war by the United States of America against the peoples of Indochina, Australia's post-arrival settlement programs had reached a 'critical stage'. This critical stage arose because of significant changes in Australia's pattern of migration and its international responsibilities with regard to non-Europeans as refugees. For the first time in seven decades these changes in global relations meant that Australia had to face the problems of actually living with the racial, cultural and linguistic differences of settlers from Asia. Between 1971 and 1977 the pattern of migration had changed, with the intake of British and European migrants being balanced by the arrival of postcolonial settlers from Asia (including Indochinese refugees), the Middle East and South America. In other words, the Fraser government, through the Galbally review, acknowledged that the exclusion of non-Europeans effected through the administrative mechanisms of White Australia politics, including the anti-Asian, 'populate or perish' immigration program that started in 1947, had come to an end with the evacuation of Australian troops from Vietnam in 1975. More importantly it was implied that Australia now confronted a 'crisis' due to the difficulties which the continuing cultural power of White Australia politics made for the arrival of postcolonial settlers under the new controlled, multiracial immigration program. The Galbally review group confirmed that it was acting on the Commonwealth government's sense of this 'crisis' (1978: 3–4):

> No doubt the Government had these circumstances in mind when it commissioned this Review...Australia is at a critical stage in relation to migrant services...it is now necessary for the Commonwealth Government to change the direction of its involvement in the provision of programs and services for migrants and to take further steps to encourage multiculturalism.

In acknowledging the legacy of White Australia politics, the review indicated that these postcolonial settlers did not have a 'long established tradition of migration to Australia' (Galbally 1978: 4). Nevertheless, their experiences of movement and displacement is a defining attribute of Australianness, providing a familiar and recurring basis for solidarity and cohesion in a nation whose peoples have been transported to penal colonies, missions and reserves or away from zones of war and poverty. These postcolonial settlers were not in the position of 'well established ethnic minority groups' to engage, negotiate or calculate the dominating culture that was still very much grounded in the power of White Australia politics (Galbally 1978: 29). Here was a discrete albeit indirect acknowledgment of the continuing effects of a century or more of White Australia politics which had mobilised biological and cultural racisms to win public consent for prohibiting the entry into Australia of non-European immigrants. Not surprisingly, the Fraser government was concerned that these postcolonial migrants and refugees were experiencing great difficulties. The complexities surrounding their initial settlement was complicated because little, if anything, had been done to counteract the cultural power of White Australia politics which, as the insistence on English-only pedagogy demonstrated, still prevailed in the late 1970s. For these postcolonial settlers to secure the right to the intergenerational transmission of their family languages as an expression of Australianness and egalitarian multilingualism would involve continuing struggles well into the new millennium.

This sense of crisis stands in stark contrast to the myths claiming that White Australia politics was abolished with the Whitlam government's important policy and legislative changes of the early 1970s (see for example Viviani 1992; Stratton 1998: 33, 40, 44). This is despite the considerable evidence that Stratton (1998) and Hage (1998) provide showing the continuing impact of what I have called the cultural power of White Australia politics (Singh 1999). Here it must be emphasised that Australia does not have an 'open non-discriminatory' immigration program; instead it is more appropriately termed a 'controlled, multi-racial' immigration program for the recruitment of skilled labour capital. This new approach to migrant recruitment began in 1973 and led to the subsequent recruitment of postcolonial migrants and refugees from 1976 onwards; this then generated a crisis over the continuing culture of White Australia politics. The government had this crisis in mind when commissioning the Galbally review, and it in turn understood that the government saw the situation as critical. Thus, at the very moment when the presence of non-European, postcolonial migrants and refugees began to actually enter Australia in 1976/77 there was a crisis to which multicultural language policies were proposed as part of the Commonwealth government's strategic responses.

Backlog of language needs

These concerns about the needs of non-European, postcolonial settlers and the crisis arising from the continuing problems of White Australia politics were not contained within or by the Galbally review. The review was enmeshed in the flux of a government crisis, where but five years previously it had an immigration program that excluded non-Europeans. Nevertheless the review also stimulated a focus on the unfulfilled needs of European migrant labour recruited during White Australia's anti-Asian, 'populate or perish' immigration program (1947–73). The early 1970s saw the rise of policy activism among those 'long established' European settlers via organisations such as Melbourne's Ecumenical Migration Centre, the Australian Greek Welfare Society, and the Migration Education Action Committee. These policy activists 'began to agitate for public intervention on behalf of a wide range of claims including language issues: primarily interpreting/translating services and English teaching' (Lo Bianco 1990: 55). They pressed for programs to sustain community languages, multilingual radio stations, better use of the nation's bilingual resources, community language television, interpreters and translators, and improved teaching of English as an addition to the family languages of students. The backlog of unmet language needs among these several million strong European-Australian settlers outweighed those of recent postcolonial settlers who were the focus of the government's initial concerns. Australia's multicultural language initiatives were 'developed to deal with the variety of White cultures that came into Australia with the European migrants of the 1950s and 1960s' (Stratton 1998: 44). The needs of postcolonial settlers were subsumed within a generic multicultural language policy that paid little attention to the crisis in White Australia politics created by the renewal of non-European immigration after seven decades of exclusion. Given this ambivalence among Anglo-ethnics about the Asian presence, Stratton (1998: 158) argues that Asian-Australians have still not been accepted as integral to the Australian multicultural order.

The government began with a concern about the crisis surrounding the newly arrived settlers from Asia, the Middle East and South America. However, the Galbally review unearthed a backlog of language needs among the 'established community of migrants', that is the European migrants recruited under the 'populate or perish' immigration program (Galbally 1978: 6). In this context a one dimensional multicultural language policy emerged to meet the needs of established European migrants for whom White Australia's English-only project had been an object of resistance. The rise of community language schools demonstrated their opposition to this linguistic imperialism (Tsounis 1974). These schools were partially articulated with state education systems, especially in South Australia, through the receipt of limited public funds for curriculum development, assistance to improve the cognitive and linguistic quality of language education and rudimentary teacher training (Kringas & Lewins 1981). There was mounting concern about the long-term social and economic costs arising from the continuing pattern of under-education being provided for bilingual students. Multicultural language policies were developed to redress the failure of White Australia's press for monolingual homogeneity and Anglo-conformity in the face of the desire by European settlers to maintain their cultural capital and sustain Australia's linguistic diversity. Its failure, evident in mounting government concerns about return migration (Dovey 1967; Zubrzycki 1973), gave rise to the recognition of the multilingual resources available among these European-Australian settlers. However, a significant redefinition of 'race' had to occur to make this possible. By the late 1970s Italians, Greeks, Maltese, Lebanese and Turkish settlers were seen as 'White' European-Australians, a move that mitigated some of the ambivalence experienced by Anglo-fundamentalist advocates of White Australia politics who saw Mediterranean peoples as 'coloureds'.

The Galbally report was made available in the languages of those postcolonial settlers who were explicitly associated with the 'critical stage' in White Australia politics, namely Arabic, Spanish and Vietnamese. It was also published in the languages of the 'established migrant communities', namely Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, Serbo-Croatian and Turkish. In accepting all the recommendations of the Galbally report (1978: 107–8), the Liberal–National government's initiatives included investing funds to stimulate the teaching of community languages throughout Australia's public and private schools. The intention was to use these limited funds to stimulate school-based projects in community languages and bilingual education in order to address the backlog of educational needs among established bilingual communities as well as newly arrived settlers. The Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA 1987) convened conferences around the country to develop a cross-sectional, nationwide approach to egalitarian multilingualism and the sustainability of linguistic diversity. FECCA actively pursued the participation of the broad constituency of 'groups with an interest in language questions: the deaf, language professionals of various kinds and, of course, Aboriginal groups' (Lo Bianco 1990: 57). Thus, multicultural language policy was not only a compromised product of government self-interest, but also a less than desired result of the policy activism by European-Australians engaged in struggles with Anglo-fundamentalist advocates of English-only pedagogy and politics.

Policy activists advocated the teaching of community languages (in addition to English) in the interests of redressing socioeconomic disadvantage. The Schools Commission's Disadvantaged Schools Program was an important medium for making this aspiration practical (Department of Education 1977). However, these activists were confronted by powerful Anglo-fundamentalist interests that emphasised, relied upon and defended White Australia's English-only politics to press for monolingualism and Anglo-conformity. The negativity of White Australia's opposition to egalitarian multilingualism reflects the resentment of Anglo-fundamentalists to any forms of knowledge and organisation that they do not and cannot control. A 1974 inquiry into schools with substantial numbers of bilingual students found that 'the response to the presence of [bilingual] children in these schools was minimal ... [they had made] no concessions to the particular needs and backgrounds of [bilingual] pupils' (Martin 1978: 124). During the mid-1970s there was increasing policy advocacy for the rights of bilingual students to be taught in their community languages, for the recruitment of bilingual teachers and teacher aides, and for the piloting of bilingual education schemes among interested clusters of schools (Fitzgerald 1976: 57–8, 60, 235). The Italian Bilingual Project in several Adelaide primary schools provided subject teaching in two languages, while Victoria's Multilingual Project provided social science courses in eight languages. The Australian Ethnic Affairs Council (AEAC) argued that the teaching of Australia's community languages was a key to achieving a renewed meaning for the equality so central to Australianness and multicultural language policy (Zubrzycki 1977: 5). While English-only monolingualism was the culturally enforced norm of White Australia politics, the AEAC's Committee on Multicultural Education argued that in a changing world all Australian students should have access to a second language (Kaldor 1981: 5).

At that time the cultural imaginings of White Australia politics placed England at the centre of its myopic global imagination. This constrained the opportunity to develop language policy as a means of constructing transnational diasporic networks or as an internationally marketable resource. The Schools Commission's Committee on Multicultural Education found it easy not to endorse the Fraser government's proposal for funding community language initiatives in schools. It argued, quite rightly, that the $500,000 provided for this program was inadequate and unrealistic. In turn, this committee questioned the government's commitment to providing sufficient resources to ensure the sustainability of the nation's linguistic diversity (McNamara 1979: 12, 55, 57). A decade later, after further advocacy and inflation, the Commonwealth was supplementing state efforts by investing in a range of language education programs: '$15.1m in 1987–88; $28m in 1988–89; $27.3m in 1989–90 and $23m in 1990–91' (Lo Bianco 1990: 64). Some states then used the School Commission's limited funding for centralised, top-down department-level cultural appreciation programs, whereas in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales there was school-based teaching of community languages and bilingual education.

The Committee on Multicultural Education challenged the government's decision to prioritise community language education. It downgraded the priority given to language education that became but one component within multiculturalism. Instead multicultural education was redefined to emphasise and celebrate the exotica of cultural diversity (McNamara 1979: 4, 16, 18, 60, 61, 63). The best this committee could do was advocate 'multicultural perspectives across the curriculum, cultural appreciation programs, ethnic studies, and intercultural studies' (McNamara 1979: 11–12). There was no specific attention given to either the linguistic needs of recent postcolonial settlers or the ever-present problems of White Australia politics. Multicultural language policy *did not* engage the exclusionary politics of White Australia which insisted on racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity through pressing 'White residents to assimilate by speaking English rather than other European languages' (Stratton 1998: 177).

Token participation without concessions for sustaining linguistic diversity

The Schools Commission's Multicultural Education Program (1979–1986) gave support to the idea of multicultural citizenship whereby bilingual Australians participate in decision-making concerning language education policies. To increase the 'involvement of [bilingual] community leaders in the formulation of policies' (API Council & AEA Council 1979: 12), funds for the Multicultural Education Program (MEP) were to be administered on the advice of a representative committee which 'should have a majority from [bilingual] communities' (McNamara 1979: 56, 15). Even at the state level, as in the instance of the Queensland Council of [Education Department] Directors, it was regarded as important 'to avoid the situation where [bilingual Australians] become merely token groups making pronouncements at a high level of generality' (Working Party on Multicultural Education 1979: 12). Speaking out against the 'lack of authentic involvement in decision-making structures', Dwyer, a Queensland school inspector, said it was very important to make 'such structural support more than mere tokenism. It is possible for those in a position of power to profess a multicultural outlook, but do nothing' (Dwyer 1979: 10, 13).

Here Anglo-ethnics and European-Australians were in agreement. These cosmopolitan Australians were advocating structures that would enable bilingual policy activists to re-imagine their positioning within the nation-state, to see themselves as having the right to contribute to the work of nation-building, and to opening up new possibilities as to what the nation might aspire to achieve. Here was an opportunity to create forums in which bilingual policy activists would, in the course of everyday concerns about the sustainability of Australia's linguistic diversity, make authorised statements on matters of national interest, specifically about the governance of the nation's languages (Hage 1998). Thus, Anglo-ethnics were to share the nation's mechanisms governing the formation of language policy. Moreover, bilingual Australians were to be empowered as co-managers of the nation's diverse linguistic resources. Given that this proposal put the central role of Anglo-fundamentalists in making language policy for a Whites-only, English-only Australia was under direct challenge, it would not have been unreasonable to anticipate their subsequent efforts at containment, cooption and outright opposition.

In order to access Commonwealth funds allocated under the MEP, state and territory multicultural coordinating committees were established in the late 1970s. The issue of 'how membership is obtained from [bilingual] communities was a matter to be resolved by each State' (McNamara 1979: 56). In three states 'at least half of the members [were] appointed from government and non-government education authorities. Elsewhere the majority of members [were] drawn from [bilingual] communities' (AIMA 1982: 113). For instance, in 1980 eight of the thirteen members of the Queensland Multicultural Coordinating Committee (QMCC) were employees of the Queensland Department of Education, including two of the four representatives of bilingual communities. That independent bilingual representatives were not in the majority in three states is indicative of the tokenism criticised by Queensland's Working Party on Multicultural Education (1979: 12) and Dwyer (1979: 10, 13). From the start of initiatives to develop multicultural language policies much was done to contain the decision-making power of European- and Asian-Australians in the making of Australia's language policy.

The MEP was established by the federal Liberal–National government to stimulate the teaching of Australia's community languages (McNamara 1979: 2; Galbally 1978: 107–8). In January 1978 the Queensland Department of Education established a Working Party on Multicultural Education (Working Party on Multicultural Education 1979: 1) to examine the 'benefits and problems associated with the introduction into schools of programs in major ethnic or community languages'. The Working Party recommended several options including differential staffing of schools having a high density of bilingual students; the employment of bilingual aides, and the conduct of pilot programs in bilingual education and community language teaching. The Department's Primary Division gave serious consideration to using the limited Commonwealth funds provided under the MEP for a pilot project based on three clusters of schools around Darra, New Farm and West End. However, very few of these possibilities ever eventuated.

The Queensland Department of Education's (1979: 148) multicultural policy, as approved by the National Party – Liberal Party State Cabinet under the leadership of Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen, advocated 'multiculturalism across the curriculum', rejecting the focus on languages as intended by the federal Liberal-National government. The policy explicitly urged the avoidance of any interpretation of multicultural policy which suggested that 'Teaching English as a Second Language, bilingualism, Modern Language Study, or programs with such labels as Ethnic Studies are, of themselves, education for a multicultural society' (Queensland Department of Education 1979: 148). This policy was based on a selective reinterpretation of ideas developed by the Officer-in-Charge of Child Migrant Education in New South Wales (Mathews 1979: 17–18). On the question of language education it contrasted markedly with Mathews's advocacy of bilingual education, community language education and the teaching of English as a second language as the key defining attributes of multiculturalism (Mathews 1979: 18). The Queensland Multicultural Coordinating Committee decided not to accord languages the predominant priority in multicultural education because it did not want to make 'a concession to ethnic minorities' (QMCC 1982: 45). Relative to other states, the QMCC 'made lesser provision for community language teaching', and gave 'less emphasis to the funding of community languages' (AIMA 1982: 115). The Australian Institute for Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) itself helped in this process by watering down the Fraser government's insistence on giving community languages the highest priority. AIMA recommended that the guidelines 'for the MEP should be adjusted to allocate funds equally between community language and multicultural education activities' (AIMA 1982: 330).

This redefinition of multicultural language policy emphasised the spectacle and colour of ethnicity for the entertainment of those Anglo-ethnics who used their power to tolerate these. Issues concerning the social and economic inequalities signified by cultural differences and how these might be redressed were replaced by tokenistic celebrations of cultural diversity and self-esteem (Hage 1998). Throughout the country multicultural policy found expression in the 'exotica' of food, dance, art, costumes and songs, as it sought to make the so-called 'deviant' bilingual students more like, but not quite, Anglo-ethnic students. Certainly, this was true even of the aspirations of Queensland's Working Party on Multicultural Education. Its discussion paper stated that multicultural policy 'is not expressed in school only through the emphasis on the exotic'; that it 'is not only for non-English speaking children to make them more like mainstream children'; and that it is 'a reiteration of the old ideology that one can succeed, even though possessed of deviant biological traits' (Working Party on Multicultural Education 1979: 12, 16).

The focus of policy shifted from a concern for sustaining linguistic diversity to mechanisms for giving legitimacy to an Anglo-centric multiculturalism whereby the cultural diversity of European-Australians provided productive pleasures for Anglo-ethnics. As a result White Australia's multicultural policy became a celebration of the symbols of ethnic diversity and an expression of the gratitude European-Australians were expected to demonstrate towards tolerant Anglo-fundamentalists (Hage 1998). This 'celebratory multiculturalism' made no provision for publicly recognising the centrality of movement and mixture in the Australian national identity. Nor did it publicly acknowledge the ambivalences Anglo-ethnics experienced in the face of the cultural hybridisation and linguistic transformations evident in the growing Australian cosmopolitics. In so far as languages provide a basis for understanding and experiencing life in Australia, and for engaging in informed action in society, control over language policy is an instrument of power. Elsewhere the Australian Population and Immigration Council and the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council stated that a key manifestation of White Australia politics was prejudice against 'the public use by settlers of their native tongues' (API Council & AEA Council 1979: 9). As Hage reminds us, Anglo-fundamentalists 'construct themselves as spatially dominant, as masters of a territory in which they have managerial rights over racialised/ethnicised groups or persons which are consequently constructed as manageable objects' (1998: 48).

The dominating English-only interests did much to minimise the realisation of Australia's egalitarian multilingualism. On the one hand, these policy compromises reinforced the subordination and stigmatisation of Australia's other languages by diverting public resource to English-only pedagogies and, on the other, they failed to engage the changing global knowledge economy wherein these languages and their speakers could thrive socially and economically. The legislated institutionalisation of egalitarian multilingualism in every day life would legitimise its use in schools, courts, the media, politics and commerce and could end the restrictions on the use of Australia's othered languages at home or among friends. However, in Australia as elsewhere, the loss of the world's multilingual resources is occurring:

> ...not because of an increase in the available choices, but because of a decrease in choice brought about by the exercise of undemocratic power. Such power is almost always wielded by denying access to resources from which communities make their living...The market of competing languages has been distorted, over the long term, by material, political, and symbolic domination of the world by a few [language] communities. (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 154)

The denial of access by bilingual Australians to decision-making positions meant that defenders of English-only politics had the power to redirect resources away from language education programs into exotic edutainment for Anglo-ethnics.

Containing White Australia's linguistic diversity

Key ideas mobilising socially progressive politics in the 1980s were consensus and accord. The *Report on a national language policy* (SSCEA 1984), developed by a group of federal politicians, promoted debate around Australia committing itself to the teaching of European, Asian and Indigenous languages. South Australia and Victoria mobilised the principles of this report to inform their developing language policies. In turn the report also gave rise to efforts by policy activists to formulate the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987). This was the first time in which the sustainability of Australia's languages became the focus of a unified, coherent and constructive social policy. Policy activists worked to weld together disparate language interests into an interlinked constituency with a high degree of affiliation. The Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education was established in late 1987. It was charged with the task of furthering, developing and implementing the goals and priorities of the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL). The Council sought to meet the needs of speakers of community languages, Indigenous languages, English as a second language, Auslan for the hearing impaired, the teaching of regional trade languages, as well as redressing adult illiteracy. Languages were also constituted as a valuable resource for the emerging knowledge economy using the idea of 'productive diversity' (Cope & Kalantzis 1997). Enterprise and heritage industries were encouraged to use the diverse cultural and linguistic resources of Australia's workforce in the national interest when engaged in globally oriented business and niche marketing. The NPL was clearly based on egalitarian principles of paying due regard to Australian community languages as both cultural and socioeconomic resources.

However, as will be seen below, the efforts of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education in working through just how the nation could best live with the difficulties of sustaining its linguistic diversity were threatened and undermined by Anglo-fundamentalist policy activists. They effectively achieved their desires of containing Australia's efforts to give meaning and substance to egalitarian multilingualism and resisted the contributions of bilingual Australians to this important work of building a cosmopolitan nation. Australian community languages were regressively alienated from the policy agenda. Where Anglo-ethnic interests took control of the language debate they advocated the teaching of Asian languages for their strategic economic value to business interests, and in return secured much of the resources allocated for language education. The global connectedness of community languages, such as those of the Vietnamese or Greek diaspora, was not recognised due to a limited economic imagination and outright antagonism.

The refusal to commit to the nation's linguistic diversity severely reduced the conceptions Anglo-ethnic policy-makers have of what is possible in building global connections through Australia's transnational disaspora. At the very least it meant a loss of the language and knowledge necessary for making these global networks work productively. This is despite bilingualism providing Australians the advantages of local and global connectedness via English as well as the benefits of tapping global communication networks available in other languages. Bilingual Australians have the ability to negotiate favourable social relations within transnational diasporic communities – skills that could be used by the nation to assist in accessing global resources; to secure help from overseas in these changing times; and, to attract international investment. Possessing sociolinguistic as well as financial capital, bilingual Australians often trade on the latter for the former (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 87, 88):

> Being a respected part of a strong community is a form of capital which under many circumstances will be more useful than goods or chattels...[They] use wealth to create networks of social obligation among their allies, with gifts, loans and hospitality... Using the form of speech of a locality is a way of tapping into the social network of that area. It shows that one belongs, that one is committed, and it engenders solidarity with others.

Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) built on the work of the Asian Studies Council as a step towards undermining what had been a growing recognition of Australia's diverse linguistic heritage and efforts to make provisions for appropriate multilingual educational, informational and training services (Moore 1996a; Ozolins 1993). The ALLP (DEET 1991) seemed to forgo what had emerged in the 1980s as a recognised need for a nationally integrated approach to language policy. Such a policy was needed to ensure equity of access to language and literacy services for those Australians for whom English should be a *second* language, and not just a replacement of their first language. Here the seeds were sown for the shift in the late 1990s from a concern for vernacular and bilingual education and the teaching of English as a *second* language to a narrowly conceived emphasis on English-only literacy. The ALLP was a significant contribution to the wedge politics used by Anglo-fundamentalists to divide cosmopolitan Australians. It drove a major division through the language constituency by its prioritisation of commercial Asian languages for Anglo-ethnic learners and by raising concerns about English literacy to the status of a national crisis. It established a bounded, discrete and specific language constituency that failed to imagine ways of incorporating Australia's other languages within an interlinked, globally oriented policy for sustaining linguistic diversity locally. Here the arguments and resources for initiatives in language and literacy provision were linked to innovations in employment and workplace training, and framed in terms of improving the economic efficiency of the business sector. Unlike the NPL (Lo Bianco 1987), this initiative increased service provision for a narrow range of languages, thereby constraining the sustainability of linguistic diversity. In effect it denied the speakers of different Australian languages the opportunity to secure resources for engaging in the ongoing struggles around White Australia's English-only politics.

The National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy, which grew out of the ALLP, took as its overriding rationale 'Australia's long-term economic interests in Asia' (Rudd 1995: 38). Based on the report *Asian languages* *and Australia's economic future* (Rudd 1994). Australia's governments claimed a new found appreciation for the importance of producing highly proficient speakers of selected Asian languages to meet the economic needs of business and commerce. This economically driven language policy has not proven to be economic. Despite this, its advocates have refused to see proficiency in the languages of Australians of Asian or European backgrounds as productive, transnational resources (Singh 1996). In the debates over the selection and resourcing of the nation's languages, those policy activists who engaged in these public debates by arguing for support for Australian community languages that have global connections were dismissed. Stephen Fitzgerald (1997: 90), Chair of the former Asian Studies Council, regarded them as 'the dogmatists of multiculturalism', apparently ignoring the need for Australia to engage with the restructured global economy. Although not objecting to the Asian presence in Australia, Fitzgerald (1997: 93) seemed to be saying that Asian-Australians had to be committed to his agenda for languages, and that they should not disparage this agenda or any other features of Australia to which he attributed value. Commenting on similar views expressed by a former Deputy Prime Minster, Hage states (1998: 104):

> He is not really worried about [Asian] migrants becoming Australian first. He is worried about asserting his role as a White Australian who can demand such a commitment from lesser Australians. He is worried that [Asian] migrants may become Australians despite him and regardless of his will, and then remove him from the national centre stage he wishes to occupy.

Not to be sidelined, Rudd (1995: 25–6) made the naive claim that a new 'paradigm' had emerged in Australia, or at least among the elites with whom he associated, to supplant the cultural power of White Australia politics. In a moment of extravagance, Rudd reasserted Anglo-ethnic control of the language policy agenda with the claim that Anglo-ethnics were no longer given to xenophobia, paternalism, racial hostility, unbridled White racism or paranoia. The denial of the continuing relevance of White Australia politics stood in marked contrast to the evidence even available at that time. For instance, the inquiry into racist violence in Australia conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1991: 140–2) 'received many submissions reporting discrimination against, and harassment of and violence towards Australians of Asian origin'. Some Asian-Australian witnesses expressed fear about publicising the extent of anti-Asian racist violence. Thus, Rudd's new paradigm left teachers of Asian languages unprepared for contesting the cultural power of White Australia politics and Anglo-fundamentalism. Consequently, the government's Asian language education strategy was unable to help Anglo-fundamentalists 'grow to accept the possibility that they are no longer what they once were and cannot therefore rewind the tapes of the cultural history' (Gilroy 2000: 129). As with multicultural language policy, the Asian language initiative also failed to sanction the development of a language education program that would empower teachers (and their students) with the means for resisting the legacy of exclusionary White Australia politics.

The views that framed the Asian languages policy denied the sociopolitical realities in which language education is embedded. They gave effect to treating as 'foreign', and therefore shielded from White Australia politics, Asian languages such as Japanese, Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesian/Bahasa Malay and Korean (Rudd 1994). Moreover, the NALSAS strategy created unwarranted divisions within Australia's language constituency and ended, for some time, the commitment to developing a broad-based language policy. This divisiveness has been capitalised upon by some governments to redirect funding to fewer languages in the pursuit of a neo-liberal ideological commitment to economic reductionism. In turn this has led, in some states, to the curtailment of funding for virtually all other languages. The effort to separate the push for Asian language education from Australia's other language constituencies was most striking in its denial of the Asia–Australia connectedness already present within Australia among speakers of Vietnamese, Mandarin, Tagalog and Hindi, among other languages. Rather than dealing with the ways in which languages have been scattered across the globe through migration and colonialism, these Anglo-ethnic policy-makers locked their imagination into seeing the language practices of bilingual, transnational Australians as being rooted in a single locality.

Fitzgerald was in a strong position to direct the reworking of the nation's language policy, having been appointed in September 1987 Chair of the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies under the Hawke Labor government (Fitzgerald 1988). This committee claimed to have shifted the emphasis of the immigration program back to economic concerns by advocating the reduction of (European) family reunion and (Indochinese) low-skilled immigration. It marginalised issues of family reunion and refugees as unrelated to the interests that this particular committee sought to secure as national imperatives. In doing so the committee increased the emphasis on the English language proficiency of prospective immigrants and thereby paved the way for a lucrative market in the teaching of English as a second/foreign language. The Hawke government was seriously embarrassed over the committee's inaccurate suggestions that bilingual Australians were failing to become citizens (the vast majority of non-citizens are of course British). Despite this, the committee's report had a decisive influence in giving a more conservative edge to Australia's immigration and language education policies. This is perhaps not surprising given Fitzgerald's apparent antagonism to anything but his Asian language education agenda, which is evident in his characterisation of multiculturalism as 'doctrinaire', and as being preoccupied 'with what divides us one from another instead of what we have in common' (Fitzgerald 1997: 82, 84). And this claim is made after dividing the teaching of Asian languages from efforts to establish a nationally integrated approach to language policy as set in train by the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education. As already noted, this Council had set out to frame a common policy to meet the needs of advocates of these regional languages as well as community languages, Indigenous languages, English as a *second* language, Auslan and adult illiteracy.

The winding back of the accord built by consensus around a disparate language constituency was pushed along with the Fitzgerald committee's report (1988) which initiated the long-running but mistaken claim that 'multiculturalism intensified this internal preoccupation' (Fitzgerald 1997: 77). To shift the nation's political leadership in the direction of the narrow and divisive Asian language education agenda, Fitzgerald chided them for being more concerned with 'multicultural opinion than with the long term future of Australia' (1997: 89). This nonsensical claim falsely asserted that the nation's future and its cosmopolitics are unrelated, and once again represented the claim by Anglo-ethnics to use their power against multicultural citizens. This line of argument has been criticised as a move by Anglo-ethnics to maintain societal control over Australia. It represents a claim by those Anglo-ethnics who see themselves as having the:

> ...monopoly of 'worrying' about the shape and future of Australia...Such pathological worry is that of [Anglo-ethnic] people who use worrying to try to construct themselves as the most worthy Australians in the land...[in] their conceptions of [bilingual Australians as] people one can make decisions about: objects to be governed. [These Anglo-ethnics] construct themselves as spatially dominant, as masters of a territory in which they have managerial rights over racialised/ethnicised groups or persons which are consequently constructed as manageable objects. (Hage 1998: 10)

Bilingual policy activists still confront the difficulties of securing the spaces where they can raise their worries about Australia's future, where they can construct themselves as worthwhile managers of Australia, and where they can engage in making the policies to shape Australian cosmopolitics.

Tongue-tieing White Australia's postcolonial settlers

By mobilising the myth of the 'end of White Australia politics' (Stratton 1998: 52, 63; Viviani 1992), Australian governments have remained silent on the threat its cultural power poses for making policies to sustain linguistic diversity and furthering the development of Australian cosmopolitics generally. Even in their most embryonic form the emerging language education policies were redefined and attacked by Anglo-fundamentalists opposed to efforts to transform the culture of White Australia politics. In Queensland, in the early 1980s, Royna Joyner's Committee Against Regressive Education (CARE 1984) campaigned against the QMCC's multicultural policy claiming it was a vehicle for allowing Asians entry into Australia. CARE asked rhetorically: 'Do we allow our humanitarian ideals to overcome our better judgement in allowing 10,000 Vietnamese refugees to enter the society?' These Anglo-fundamentalists claimed that investing in community languages and bilingual education was a 'criminal waste' of taxes because it is an 'attempt to lock children into divisive Asian or other alien cultures' (CARE 1984: 3), conveniently ignoring the taxes paid by bilingual Australians. According to these Anglo-fundamentalist activists, encouraging community languages would 'eventually see White Anglo-Saxon society overrun' (Milne 1984). While these attacks on Australia's linguistic diversity were used

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by Anglo-fundamentalists to incite fears about the possible loss of their privilege to dominate the nation's politics, they also refute White Australia's claims to tolerance. These Anglo-fundamentalists falsely represented their capacity to dominate the language policy-making agenda as being so tenuous and so insecure that they had to resort to the symbolic violence their governments once used against non-Europeans (Rivett 1962; Rivett 1975). This attack on bilingual education and Australian egalitarian multilingualism sought to incite the fears needed by Anglo-fundamentalists to mobilise the anti-Asian racism needed to protect their power and privilege.

In response to these Anglo-fundamentalist assertions about the challenge multicultural languages posed for White Australia politics, the Queensland Minister for Education reassured that state's Parliament that the Education Department's policy would not cause any changes. The Minister sought to reinforce the desire of White Australia politics for racial and linguistic homogeneity, so as to curtail the possibility that anyone other than Anglo-ethnics would make public policy. Specifically the Minister stated, 'In fact the reverse is the case – [multicultural language policy] reinforces the principles of the [White] Australian culture as a homogenous one which has evolved over 200 years' (Queensland Legislative Assembly 1984: 1391). Unfortunately the Minister was wrong on two counts. First, the creation of a Whites-only, English-only Australia was not a matter of 'evolution', rather a social experiment in racist purification ran from the 1860s until the early 1970s, continually meeting setbacks to achieving its goals. Second, racial, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity has characterised much of Australia's history, including the years since 1788. The controlled, multiracial immigration program initiated in the 1970s was a return to this trajectory.

Early in 1984 Geoffrey Blainey, an historian, reasserted the desire of White Australia politics for Anglo-fundamentalists to make all policy decisions about the future of the nation and its peoples. He claimed that the Hawke federal government was allowing too many Indochinese migrants and refugees to enter Australia: 'The pace of Asian immigration is now far ahead of public opinion in those suburbs and workplaces to which many Vietnamese and Kampuchean [that is, Cambodian] refugees will go' (Blainey 1984: 25). Some Anglo-fundamentalists are locked into a mindset that it is they who should decide whether Other Australians may speak in different languages on the streets, at parties or in their workplaces. Cultural racism is used to claim racial differences give rise to absolute and irreconcilable cultural differences. While the social divisiveness of such White racism does not go unchallenged, this articulation of the powerful motivating desires of White Australia politics incites suspicion, resentment and serious conflicts: a 'torrent of racist abuse was unleashed against Asians. Australian students from Asia were mistreated, and racist graffiti proliferated' (McQueen 1984: 41). These disputes over the struggles to sustain the nation's linguistic diversity provided a focus for conflicts over basic inequalities within Australian society.

In August 1988, John Howard, Opposition Leader and subsequent Prime Minister, invited Anglo-fundamentalists to exercise their power over these Other Australians. He stated his belief that Asian immigration should be reduced, thereby raising the prospect of reintroducing an immigration program based on explicit racist discrimination. This Anglo-fundamentalism is supported by the political culture of the mass media which uses appeals to English-only politics to silence Other Australians. For example, one radio commentator reportedly 'described it as "ignorant and arrogant" that Chinese [-Australian] people would speak Chinese at a party in Australia. These people are ignorant if they sit there and they talk in another language, in Australia we have English' (Wilmoth 1999: 15). This aggressive attack on the sustainability of Australia's community languages is also indicative of the growing sense that cosmopolitan Australians are increasingly bilingual or aspiring to be such. Today, to be Australian means being bilingual. There is an increasing sense that 'egalitarian multilingualism' is a feature of Australianness as much as a matter of national interest in this era of global restructuring.

A little over two decades after the Galbally review (1978) there emerged a report from the Australian National Multicultural Advisory Council (Roach 1999) which was chaired by the Indian-Australian business executive, Neville Roach. The Council reported that between 1984 and 1998 Australia had experienced a 'divisive debate initiated by a few individuals and minority political groups who have been critical of some aspects of our non-discriminatory immigration program and multiculturalism' (Roach 1999: vii). In her maiden speech in the House of Representatives, Pauline Hanson (1998) invoked the fear of Asians, a powerful motivating force in White Australia politics: 'I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians'. Hanson was among those Anglo-fundamentalists who incited others who identified as Anglo-ethnics to feel 'threatened by...people speaking languages they could not understand' (Stratton 1998: 31). She went on to advocate the abolition of multicultural language policies, the winding back of the selective, controlled, multiracial immigration program and the retrenchment of the social cohesion built around these. Hage characterises this regressive parochialism as the 'affective politics of Hansonism' or the 'Hansonisation of our soul and our national culture' (1998: 73, 25). However, this demonising of individuals tends to overlook Hanson's policy advocacy as an expression of the continuing legacy of the cultural power of White Australia politics. Each of the major political parties have produced activists enthusiastically dedicated to using the resources of White Australia politics to reintroduce its assimilationist, Whites-only, English-only project for European-Australians and an immigration program that excludes Asians. Moreover, much of the One Nation/White Nation agenda has been adopted by the Howard government.

Hanson and Howard are among those political leaders who want 'to return Australia to its circumstances in the 1950s...who champion the culture of pre-European and Levantine, and Asian, migrations period' (Stratton 1998: 147, 164). Theirs is a nostalgia for an imagined time before the rise of multicultural languages;

before the end to restrictions on non-European immigration; before the time when Anglo-ethnicity came to be seen as just one among many Australian ethnicities. Then Australian English was mobilised to emphasise linguistic difference from England and as a sign of Anglo-ethnic conformity on the part of European settlers. The Australian National Multicultural Advisory Council's report acknowledged that these attacks on controlled, multiracial immigration and non-discrimination in post-arrival settlement drew on a hundred or more years of White Australia politics. The report observed that White Australia politics informed a diverse range of policies generated by Australia's governments. For instance the assimilationist project directed against European immigrants was based on a commitment to linguistic 'homogeneity and a vision of Australia as a racially pure White nation. The policy effectively excluded non-European immigration' (Roach 1999: 20).

With the growth of the global knowledge economy, and the rhetoric that is mobilising action around it, Australia now has another opportunity to produce a cosmopolitan language policy committed to sustaining linguistic diversity and to address the continuing problem of White Australia politics. The importance of the One Nation/White Nation campaign which garnered support from over one million Australian voters is that these Anglo-fundamentalists made evident the ongoing salience of the cultural power of White Australia politics in language policy-making. While misdirected, One Nation's actions were the unaccounted social costs of government duplicity in the pursuit of radical neo-liberal ideology. The One Nation/White Nation campaign is typical of responses worldwide to the dogma of the 'inevitability' of the neo-liberal agenda for global restructuring through the local destructuring of public security and the common wealth of citizens (Bourdieu 1998: 29–44). The neo-liberal ideology of globalism has involved the glorification of market-based regulation; the loss of a collective, common wealth to privatisation, and the facilitation of the transfer of industries, capital and work to overexploited countries. It has also involved leveraging government controls on financial flows, exchange rates and interest rates from the nation-state to concentrate these in financial markets. Added to this has been the imposition of a narrowly conceived business mentality on non-commercial activities; the destructuring of public security in areas of employment, education, health and welfare; and the regression to a penal state, a phenomenon particularly evident in the internment of Indigenous Australians and asylum seekers. The social costs of these initiatives – those made to pay for the violence associated with this radical concern to maximise profit above all else – have been displaced onto marginalised constituencies, including Indigenous and Asian-Australians: a displacement exploited by cynical, resentment politics.

Perhaps even more significant in this context is the contestation between those Anglo-fundamentalists who tried to contain language policy by making token concessions to European-Australians and those seeking to reassert control over Asian-Australians. Either way they wanted to reassure themselves that they are still in control, that they could still impose their restrictions on all Other Australians, and all this despite the considerable evidence of Anglo-ethnic dominance throughout Australia. By the 1990s Australians of Asian backgrounds were increasingly being represented as, and seeking to represent themselves as part of Australian cultural, political and economic life. Ironically, campaigns to restore White Australia politics have secured their strength largely because of 'the new visibility of Asians and Asian cultures which is a result of their acceptance [by a good many Anglo-ethnics] into the Australian cultural imaginary as aspects of the Australian nation, as elements in the make-up of Australian national identity' (Stratton 1998: 164). However, White Australia politics has promulgated the mistaken idea that people have a single, fixed sense of national identity:

> In today's global village, no one is only one thing. We all have overlapping and intersecting identities...We need to divest ourselves of the traditional equation between language, nation, and state because...it never actually corresponded to reality anyway. (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 196–7)

Because Australians must now act globally to maintain local viability, the sustaining of its linguistic diversity is of increased national significance:

> ...local languages [are needed] for expressing local identities and global languages [are needed] for communicating beyond local levels and expressing our identities as citizens of the world. The active cultivation of stable multilingualism can provide a harmonious pathway through the clash of values inherent in today's struggle between the global and the local, between uniformity and diversity. (Nettle & Romaine 2000: 197)

In the global knowledge economy the languages of the world's diasporic communities now provide the means for communicating beyond the local in order to enhance the viability of the local. The global knowledge economy is not a monolithic, monolingual 'space', but rather it is constituted by a diversity of peoples, operating across diverse real-world locations, using a diversity of languages. There are many local languages which now stretch diasporically over much of the world, and which are now intimately connected via the Internet. A government committed to the knowledge economy would be keen to find out how bilingual Australians use the Internet, how they relate its social, cultural and economic possibilities to themselves and Australia's future. Certainly there is now a need to know more about how bilingual Australians of specific cultural backgrounds are making themselves at home and doing business in this new communicative environment.

Revitalising efforts to sustain linguistic diversity and to challenge White Australia politics

We now have a basis for making an historically informed appraisal of the cosmopolitan languages policy which the Fraser Liberal-National government attempted to give impetus in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The events over the ensuing years have shown that White Australia politics and Anglo-fundamentalist antagonism towards the Asian diasporic presence is still a pivotal problem for Australian cosmopolitics. These forces which have done so much to undermine the sustainability of Australia's linguistic diversity are still very powerful today; they continue to threaten the opportunities cosmopolitan Australians have for learning languages othered by English-only politics. No doubt languages will continue to be a significant site of struggles and compromises in government policy-making. Clearly there are some elements of this policy that should be maintained, even some elements that should be defended, such as bilingual education and community language teaching. And yet there is still much to be done to reign in the cultural power of White Australia politics. Four key achievements of language policy over the past thirty-odd years provide a point of departure and resources for future policy activism intended to produce a new settlement for sustaining Australia's linguistic diversity.

First, given the advocacy of bilingual Australians regarding language policy it is important that they are conceived of as informed and active Australian citizens and not simply as the objects of government policies on migrant labour or the hapless victims of cultural racism. In this way European- and Asian-Australians can be seen, even if it is grudgingly, as having the capacity for policy activism, and as being active participants with Anglo-ethnics in shaping their own destiny and that of this their nation. Since the 1996 elections Asian-Australian communities have become politicised; before this they were not so active. Increasingly we see Asian-Australians analysing and debating the circumstances of their life situation as they continue to face the problems of Whites-only, English-only politics. This involves the identification of languages under threat of loss, assessing which functions of these languages are crucial to intergenerational transmission, and stablising these languages by transmitting them to the next generation.

Second, language policy activists stimulated increasing recognition that Australia's anti-Asian, Whites-only, 'populate or perish' immigration program (1947–1973) has been pressed aside by a new controlled, multiracial immigration program. We now have, once again, to reconceptualise our thinking about issues of migration, identity and languages. For the briefest of moments, multicultural language policy held out the promise of redressing the alienating effects of White Australia's assimilationist project which was initially directed against European migrant labour. However, the complexities of the postcolonial, non-European presence tended to be overlooked, largely because of Galbally's all too oblique observations on the crisis surrounding White Australia's politics. It may be possible to create a new settlement that reworks and reinvents the global connectedness of local Australian languages around Australian cosmopolitics. Part of that settlement could involve thinking through a new language policy that is also 'capable of recognising and dealing realistically with the [Anglo-fundamentalists'] sense of cultural loss from which neo-fascism is being fed' (Hage 1998: 26).

Third, language policy activists encouraged an awareness of the multiple cultural traditions and diverse linguistic heritages of the Australian peoples. As in the past, they still want to see the speaking of a second language a routine matter of daily life. Moreover, they still hope that a commitment to sustaining linguistic diversity could be a source of national prestige, with influential cosmopolitan Australians using diverse languages in a range of socially and economically significant forums at home and abroad. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency among advocates of White Australia politics to use concepts such as 'English as a second language' and 'bilingual education' as code words for expressing their opposition to Australia's controlled, multiracial immigration program and the recruitment of postcolonial settlers. The strategy has been to totalise all under negative labels such as 'non-English speaking background', rather than to look at the particularly precarious position occupied by some. For instance, now it is no longer acceptable to treat 'Asian-Australians' or 'languages othered through English-only politics' as a homogeneous entity. Not all Chinese-Australian women, for instance, necessarily share the same perspectives on, say, issues of White Australia politics, Australian cosmopolitics or language education. Thus, it cannot be assumed that a similar experience, such as racist vilification or attacks on speaking community languages, will lead to the same response among Chinese-Australian women. These women have migrated from places with histories as different and languages as diverse as those found in New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan or the People's Republic of China. Their interests vary by language, age, class, intergenerational experiences and country of origin.

Fourth, the Asian language education agenda has proved most successful in gaining recognition for the political and economic desires driving the neo-liberal ideology which came to dominate the nation's language policy agenda in the 1980s. Unfortunately, some language policy activists 'neglected, naively, to acknowledge the pragmatic (economically and politically derived) perspective which in Australia has proved to be a critical factor in attaining government support for a national policy on language' (Lo Bianco 1990: 60). Bilingual community interests were not successful in articulating the need for sustaining linguistic diversity with government interest in using languages to extend its global economic interests. In this context the transnational connectedness of European- and Asian-Australians via their diasporic language communities, facilitated by the new technologies of human interaction, may now be important for language policy activists given the emphasis on global connectedness and the emerging knowledge economy. This means that people's sense of identity is now much less constrained; the boundaries of their sense of self need no longer terminate at the nation's borders. The new digital technologies provide the means whereby people's identities can now travel the distance of the planet to create qualitatively exciting new social, cultural and economic interactions. Moreover, people's identities are increasingly being transformed through the workings of consumer society, being shaped by the cultural industries and branded commodities of the global marketplace (Gilroy 2000: 106-108). Consideration might usefully be given by diasporic business councils to examining the role of languages in the global connectedness of Australians and what this may mean for Australia in redressing the tensions between the interdependent and difficult processes of globalisation and localisation. While neo-liberal ideology of globalisation has prioritised the political economy of globalisation and considered language policy in quite narrow reductionist terms, this is unlikely to be a useful approach for language policy activists. Moreover, they might find it more useful to engage with language policy issues within the framework offered by the global knowledge economy, the Internet and transnational diasporic communities. This means engaging with the dangers of language extinction and knowledge death created by the project of globalising English, and exploring the increasingly problematic relationship between language and the nation-building work of forming a national political consciousness. The social costs of failing to address these issues need to be built into economic calculations and decisions regarding vernacular language education.

Conclusion

A key question for Australia is whether it will continue to be swamped by Anglo-fundamentalists intent on sustaining White Australia politics. Contrary to the myth that White Australia politics ended in the early 1970s the history of language policy reveals its continuing presence. Australia's multicultural and Asian language policies have been the focus of Anglo-fundamentalist campaigns to mobilise the cultural power of White Australia politics and to reinstate its regime of anti-Asian discrimination. The cultural power of White Australia politics has been mobilised against the restoration of the Asian presence and the evolving Australian cosmopolitics through a series of disjointed strategies which have lessened the potential of policies for sustaining linguistic diversity or positioning Australia advantageously within the world's multilingual knowledge economy. Australia's language policies, and the numerous reviews, reports and projects that contained or otherwise coopted their ongoing remaking, confronted the continuing problem of White Australia politics. Together this is indicative of the need for a new settlement around Australia's distinctive cosmopolitics. Despite this, governments have failed to deal with both the nation's cosmopolitics and the continuing problem of White Australia politics in any direct or explicit ways. The concern expressed in the Galbally review and reiterated in the report of the Australian National Multicultural Advisory Council (Roach 1999) is that White Australia politics continues to upset the social cohesion established around the nation's controlled multiracial immigration and multicultural settlement programs. A generous reading of the Roach report accepts the continuing legacy of White Australia politics as a major problem facing Australian cosmopolitics. It is important that language policy activists understand that their work necessarily involves engagement with issues of economic, social and historical concern; to fail to do so minimises their leverage on the policy-making process.

Ironically, the presence, forms and causes of anti-Asian racisms throughout the past four decades were not highlighted as much as the activism of the Anglo-fundamentalist advocates of White Australia politics indicated the need. The campaigns of anti-Asian racism during the 1980s and 1990s divided this country. They now directly threaten efforts to establish social cohesion around the repositioning of Australian languages education within the debate over the global knowledge economy and the potential contribution of Australia's bilingual diaspora for extending the nation's global economic and social interests. White Australia's multicultural policy, as exemplified by developments that emphasised token involvement and no language concessions to bilingual Australians, came nowhere near addressing these problems. It is important that a new settlement between Indigenous-Australians, European-Australians, Asian-Australians and Anglo-ethnics speak to the interests and powerful fears frequently mobilised by Anglo-fundamentalists around White Australia politics. While these European and Asian settlers need public support in facing the losses and gains of transition, Anglo-ethnics need support as the stagnant mores of White Australia politics are broken down and the construction of Australian cosmopolitics is realised.

The struggles over Australia's language policies suggest possibilities for the revitalisation of efforts to pursue Australian cosmopolitics as a nation-building project and to challenge the continuing legacy of White Australia politics. There is a wide and growing gap between any recognition of the problems created by the cultural power of White Australia politics and the actual recognition of the measures that might usefully accommodate Australia's cosmopolitics. At the heart of this gap between hope and happening are ambivalences that create significant spaces for intervention by language policy activists concerned to engage in negotiating these opposing but interrelated tendencies.

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6 The cost of literacy for some

Anthea Taylor

Introduction

This chapter examines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and literacy concerns and locates Indigenous Australians' language and literacy within the wider context of Australian language and literacy policy statements. It is argued that neither policy nor practice has been able to find a praxis that adequately takes account of, on the one hand, the stated Indigenous desire for Standard Australian English (SAE) language and literacy competence; and, on the other, the dynamics of contemporary identity politics — Indigenous resistance to assimilation and the employment of counter-hegemonic strategies necessary for social and cultural survival.

In this discussion language and literacy policy is located within the historical context of Indigenous affairs policy before a brief overview of Aboriginal language use in contemporary Australia is presented. The chapter then reviews key mainstream and Indigenous language and literacy policy statements followed by a particular highlighting of the issue of literacy within the Indigenous context. A consideration of fundamental issues underpinning language and literacy policy development for Indigenous Australia concludes the chapter.

It is the urban context in settled Australia and issues to do with SAE language and literacy policy and practice that is foregrounded here rather than issues concerning ancestral Indigenous languages and the remote context. My argument is informed both by fieldwork carried out in various regions of Western Australia and the literature. The focus is therefore on Aboriginal Australia although many of the issues raised also apply to the Torres Strait Islander language situation.

Background

Prior to the 1970s, academy-based linguists and some missionaries, particularly those from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, maintained an interest in Indigenous languages and language use. However, it was the 1972 Whitlam government that came to power with a pre-election promise which involved a greater attention to Indigenous languages and language use that heralded a greater interest in and resourcing of the field. Six months after election, the new government embarked on a campaign to introduce bilingual education.[1]

In a historical review of Australia's language policies, Michael Clyne (1991a) identified four policy phases which he deemed: 'accepting but laissez faire' (from settlement to the mid-1870s); 'tolerant but restrictive' (from the 1870s to 1900s); 'rejecting' (about 1914 to 1970); and 'accepting and even fostering' (from the 1970s). He points out (p 8) that the post-1970 phase initially concerned a push for wider ethnic rights but was followed by an interest-based demand for action and 'strong government support', particularly evidenced by the establishment in 1982 of a Senate inquiry chaired by Senator Mal Colston that produced the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (SSCEA) report *A national language policy* in 1984.

According to Clyne (1991a: 9) the chapter in the SSCEA report dealing with Aboriginal languages is its 'most enlightened and innovative'. He goes on to say:

> In a way that is sensitive to the needs and wishes of the communities, the Committee recommended an urgent increase in resources for the study of Aboriginal languages and the training of Aboriginal linguists, the expansion of bilingual maintenance programs, and the wider teaching of Aboriginal languages to all Australians. All this was to be done in consultation with communities.

The historical stages identified by Clyne that culminated in what he describes as 'strong government support' can be seen against a backdrop of wider changes in Indigenous affairs policy over the settled history of Australia. During the nineteenth century there were initial attempts at conciliation (1788–1820s) before systematic moves were made to Christianise and civilise (1830s and 1840s) followed by policies and practices designed to pacify by force (1840–1880). By the twentieth century, so-called 'protection' policies were in place in most states and these were steadily strengthened until World War II. The post-war period was characterised by a nationwide imposition of assimilation policies designed to move Aboriginal Australians to adopt what was perceived to be the mainstream 'Anglo-Australian' lifestyle and thus qualify for citizenship. Assimilation policies began to crack when Australians voted in the 1967 referendum to allow the Commonwealth government to enter Aboriginal affairs administration in what had hitherto been a state responsibility. In 1972 the new Labor government introduced a policy of self-determination involving for the first time attempts at widespread consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and their inclusion in Indigenous affairs policy-making, administration and decision-making. Subsequent governments, both Liberal and Labor, have redefined self-determination to mean, in effect, self-management and self-sufficiency.

Three periods of government thinking and policy regarding Aboriginal languages have been identified (Schmidt 1990: 37): the 'crunch point' of harsh assimilationist pressures of repression and denigration of Indigenous languages from 1788 to the 1970s; the beginning of 'recognition and support' in the 1970s; and, a period of resurgence of 'awareness and interest' in language maintenance in the 1980s. However, overall, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA) report *Language and culture – a matter of survival* (1992) concluded that, with few exceptions, the official attitude to Indigenous languages has been of one repression (HRSCATSIA 1992: 75).

Contemporary Indigenous language use

Despite past pervasive assimilationist policies and pressures throughout the history of settlement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have retained a strongly distinctive language use. While great diversity exists among Indigenous Australians, language use remains a highly salient identity marker both within groups and between Indigenous Australians and the wider community in settled and the remote contexts. Switching between languages and 'codes', according to context and even within a single situation, is a common facility for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.

While few ancestral Aboriginal languages remain in a 'strong' position in everyday use, particularly by youth (Schmidt 1990: 4), in northern Aboriginal Australia a new Aboriginal language, Kriol, has emerged employing ancestral Indigenous phonologies and semantics with a transformed English lexicon to create a new language (Sandefur 1985, 1986; Hudson 1984a, 1984b, 1985). Similar processes of creolisation have occurred in the Torres Strait (Shnukal 1965, 1983a, 1983b).[2] However, by far the most ubiquitous language situation across Indigenous Australia, is the employment of a distinctive non-standard variation of English, known as Aboriginal English. According to Malcolm and Koscielecki (1997), Aboriginal English shows consistencies across the continent and work by authors such as Kaldor and Malcolm (1980, 1991), Malcolm (1982a, 1982b), Eagleson, Kaldor and Malcolm (1982) and Eades (1988, 1995) has highlighted the importance of sociolinguistic features of Aboriginal English and identified significant differences from those commonly associated with Standard Australian English usage.

Prior to the era of self-determination, while fast disappearing ancestral languages were slowly being recorded for the archives and consideration as a vehicle for Christianisation, Aboriginal English and the creoles were generally disregarded as something of a temporary deficit along the road to full assimilation and tended to escape academic scrutiny. However, after 1972 there was a burgeoning of published material on Aboriginal language and literacy, much of it aimed at workers in the field, such as teachers, and health and social workers. Two such widely circulated works at the time were the journal *The Aboriginal Child at School* (established in 1973 and published by Queensland University) and the publication *Language problems and Aboriginal education* (Brumby & Vaszolyi 1977), a collection of published and unpublished papers drawn from teachers, academics and linguists and including Aboriginal contributors.

Signs of change

Much of the 'enlightenment and innovation' in the 1984 SSCEA report (the Colston report) that was noted by Clyne (1991a) is without doubt the balance that the report gave to the acknowledgment of the realities of the classical language situation, on the one hand and, on the other, the move away from viewing Aboriginal English use as deficit. The Colston report acknowledged and supported ancestral Aboriginal language maintenance and, in calling for the development of a national language policy, made a case for Aboriginal language issues to be regarded differently from migrant language issues. Importantly, it explicitly acknowledged (p 2) that a national policy would not be able to ensure the survival of Aboriginal community languages.

The Colston report mapped Aboriginal English speakers and reiterated the observation by linguist Susan Kaldor (1976: 211 cited in SSCEA 1984: 82) that bidialectical Aboriginal children constituted a group that had received inadequate attention, particularly where they constituted a minority in a predominantly SAE-speaking mainstream school. The report recommended (p 61) bidialectical teaching issues be included in pre-service teacher training. While endorsing the acquisition of English by all Australian residents, the report also made note of a New South Wales submission to the inquiry, which called for the recognition of Aboriginal English as a legitimate version of Standard Australian English.

While the report's primary focus was on language use, its specific references to literacy signalled an awareness that language use and literacy may constitute issues of two different orders in the Indigenous Australian scheme of things. The report, for example, cited (p 59) Aboriginal academic Eve Fesl's observation that not all Aboriginal people might be interested in literacy attainment (Fesl 1982).

Language salvage, maintenance and reproduction were also key themes in the subsequent *National Policy on Languages* – the NPL (Lo Bianco 1987). One of the NPL's major objectives was to 'stimulate, coordinate and initiate significant long and short-term activity to assist in the preservation, continued use and appreciation of and salvage work on Aboriginal languages' (p 105). Continued active use of such languages was said to be 'bound up with the prospects for the survival of Aboriginal culture and identity' (p 108) and a source of cultural knowledge for other Aboriginal people and the wider society. In addition to recommending an active language maintenance policy and bilingual and bicultural education, it also recommended '[a]ppropriate classes in English and literacy for adults' (p 108). However, in outlining the recommended role of the National Aboriginal Languages Project (NALP) – set up to support the implementation of the policy – the overwhelming focus was on support for ancestral language maintenance and bilingual education and no mention was made of literacy acquisition (pp 117–19).

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the interest in ancestral Aboriginal language maintenance generated in the post 1972 period, Schmidt (1990: 40) concluded that:

> ...despite the increased awareness of Aboriginal languages in the 1980s, these codes remained poorly recognised and supported vis-à-vis other minority and foreign languages in Australia. For example, in education there are no Aboriginal languages included in the Languages Other Than English curriculum at matriculation level in any secondary school in the continent. Instead of studying Indigenous Aboriginal languages, students in this country (including Aboriginal people) are taught imported languages...

She supported this observation by drawing on evidence from the NPL (Lo Bianco 1987) to make a comparison between resources allocated to the support of Aboriginal language and the allocation of resources, the provision of interpreting services and the allocation of NALP money to migrant services.

Throughout the 1990s the role of language as 'cultural survival' was continued in language and literacy statements and was linked to notions of 'stability' and individual identity. Both *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) and the HRSCATSIA report *Language and culture – a matter of survival* (1992) acknowledged the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language backgrounds. In *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) reference was also made to the role of language choice in cultural transmission, acknowledging the 'status and importance of Aboriginal languages' and emphasising their critical importance 'as a vehicle for social stability and development' (DEET 1991, companion volume: 91) and as:

> ...a major vehicle for expressing Aboriginality and Aboriginal ways of thinking. They are a symbol of identity for many Aboriginal people, being central to their self-esteem, cultural respect and social identification.

Similarly, with respect to Aboriginal English, the policy pointed out that it also has 'social values and cultural properties equivalent to those of Australian Indigenous and creolised languages' (p 9).

Aboriginal calls for language recognition and bilingual education

In 1975, under the new Self-determination Policy, the Schools Commission established an Aboriginal Consultative Group which became the forerunner to the influential National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC). In the Aboriginal Consultative Group's 1975 report to the Schools Commission, concern was mostly to do with increasing Indigenous representation in Australian educational decision-making and practice. However, it recommended that 'state or Australian education departments introduce bilingual or vernacular programs into schools only with the agreement of the local Aboriginal and Islander community' (Recommendation 20a) and that the Schools Commission and all state education authorities (Recommendation 21):

> a [develop] suitable language programs…for Aboriginal children who speak English as a second language. This includes immediate evaluation and adaptation of existing techniques used by state education authorities, and, [that] if feasible, modification of second language techniques used in immigrant programs.
>
> b [and that] teachers working with Aboriginal and Island [sic] children be specially trained in Teaching English as a Second Language techniques that are suitable for Aboriginal students.

The report also recommended (pp 27–8) that a non-examinable Aboriginal languages studies elective unit be made available to all Australian secondary school students as part of an Aboriginal studies program.

After 1972, with Commonwealth government endorsement of bilingual education in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, programs employing ancestral Aboriginal languages began to be implemented in schools under Commonwealth jurisdiction. In the states there were various responses to this federal initiative. In the Western Australian Education Department, for example, an informal policy existed that bilingual education would not be introduced in state schools in Aboriginal communities unless: such a program was requested by a community; there was agreement on which language was to be the medium of instruction; literate adults resided in the community; a resident linguist was available; and there was a store of print materials already existing in the language (C Metcalfe, linguist, pers. comm. 1978). Needless to say, while the wisdom of such criteria is evident, few communities have ever fulfilled these conditions and the Education Department of Western Australia did not move to assist their development.[3]

With regard to Kriol, other creoles and Aboriginal English, a bilingual program employing Kriol commenced at Bamyili in Northern Territory in the late 1970s, and throughout the 1980s there were increasing calls, particularly by teachers in the field, to consider Aboriginal English and creole language use as different rather than deficient (see for example Hudson 1984b; Hudson & Taylor 1987).

However, a decade after the NAEC report (Aboriginal Consultative Group 1975), bilingual programs were catering for only 7 to 8 per cent of Aboriginal schoolchildren (HRSCAE 1985: 93) and in 1988 the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force, under the then federal Department of Employment, Education and Training, was calling for the government to develop a national Aboriginal languages policy that recognised the need to increase access to bilingual and bicultural programs and provide both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students access to the study of Aboriginal languages (1988: 26). While neither Kriol nor Aboriginal English were specifically mentioned, the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education's 1985 report *Aboriginal education* did refer to two 'English-as-a-second-dialect' programs (one operating at Traeger Park in Alice Springs and the other – the Van Leer Language Development Program – in Queensland). The report also acknowledged some development in this sphere at the individual school level (1985: 94).

Language has always been, and still is, inextricably tied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and is a critical factor in past and contemporary Indigenous politics. Enemburu (1989: 13 cited in HRSCATSIA 1992: 30), writing of Aboriginal English in Koori identity politics, stated that:

> ...the growing importance of the social role of Koori English is becoming increasingly obvious with the emergence of strong feelings of ingroup solidarity, the re-establishment of Koori identity, the growing awareness of Koori culture and the drive of Koori people to maintain levels of education within their cultural framework.

English language and literacy policy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

While the National Aboriginal Languages Project (NALP) was established in 1987 and operated for three years, it was, as the HRSCATSIA report (1992: 77) points out, more a fund than a program. The development of a discrete national Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and literacy policy has not occurred as such but has been subsumed within wider Australian language policy statements. For example, the ALLP (1991) considered that all Australians require 'effective' literacy in English (DEET 1991, companion volume: 9). Within the policy, reference was made to 'Australian English' of which the policy considered SAE a variety 'spoken and recognised by most native speakers of English in Australia' (p 9). Under the umbrella term 'Australian English', the policy included varieties of Aboriginal English which the policy (p 9) described as:

> ...a set of varieties of English ranging from forms virtually indistinguishable from Standard Australian English, to forms which non-Aboriginal people find difficult to understand without special instruction.

Within the category of 'languages other than English', the policy (p 10) referred to 'Aboriginal languages' which include not only 'traditional' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages but also creolised languages such as Kriol and Torres Strait Creole. While the ALLP supported and encouraged the maintenance and wider use of Aboriginal languages (see chapter 5 in the ALLP), it was also concerned with English language and literacy. A stated aim (p 94), therefore, was to ensure Aboriginal literacy in English was to be:

> ...raised to a level commensurate with the English literacy competencies of all other Australians to allow Aboriginal people to participate effectively in the social, cultural and economic life of Australia.

This was consistent with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP – Aboriginal Education Policy). The AEP sought, among other objectives (including recognition of the value of and support for language maintenance programs) '...to enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal people' (DEET, AEP Joint Policy Statement 1993: 14). As a national priority from 1993 to 1995, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs nominated an Aboriginal Literacy Strategy involving '...an intensification of efforts to improve English literacy among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island schoolchildren and adults' (DEET, AEP Overview 1993: 7).

The *National strategy for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1996–2002* continues to identify as a 'priority for action' increased proficiency in SAE with literacy and numeracy skills seen as 'crucial pre-conditions for achievement across all learning areas' (MCEETYA 1995: 5). The strategy also identifies as a priority the 'active involvement' of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and care-givers in all aspects of their children's education (p 4).

While the ALLP did caution that the acquisition of literacy in English need not be at the expense of other Aboriginal languages (DEET 1991: 90), the National Strategy pursued the implications of this (MCEETYA 1995: 5), stating that:

> ...there are tensions between what is 'equitable' and what is 'appropriate' educational achievement. In simple terms, the tensions are between whether education and training develop skills for the mainstream or for cultural transmission.

The *Discussion paper on an Australian literacy and language policy for the 1990s* saw literacy as involving the 'integration of reading, writing, listening, speaking and critical thinking' (DEET 1990: 4) and the subsequent ALLP broadened the definition to include, not just reading and writing, but oracy and numeracy (DEET 1991: 9). The discussion paper's definition also stated that literacy included 'the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations'. It further went on to say (DEET 1990: 5) that:

> ...the development of literacy skills is not the responsibility just of education institutions. It falls also to families and individuals who have responsibilities to develop an environment and nurture attitudes which

> promote learning. If people do not acquire literacy skills during childhood, then there is a big risk that they will miss out on the benefits accorded by full participation in society.

But to whose cultural knowledge and to which type of learning and to which families was the discussion paper referring? While this phrasing was subsequently dropped from the policy statement a year later it remains implicit in the ALLP (for example, pp 14, 39).

Where the Colston report (1984) stimulated the development of the ALLP and the development of policies in each state, almost a decade later the White Paper (DEET 1991) explicitly located education generally and literacy specifically as an economic issue and, as Clyne says, it 'was increasingly seen in terms of short-term economic and training goals' (1991a: 15). While funding for Aboriginal language maintenance programs was increased, most of the grants for Aboriginal language and literacy were for English literacy programs for Aboriginal people (Clyne 1991a: 18). Notwithstanding the recent work such as that being undertaken by Malcolm et al (1999a, 1999b) and the Western Australian 'Solid English' project (Education Department of Western Australia 1999), there have not been serious attempts at exploring the place of Aboriginal English in policy or practice at the national level.

The literacy issue

In the National Literacy survey (1996, ABS, cat. 42260.0) and again in national literacy test results released in March 2000 (The West Australian, April 1st, 2000, p.7), Indigenous students continue to score significantly below the wider population. In Western Australia, for example, while 88 per cent of the Year 3 population achieved a pass on this test, only 54.4 per cent of Indigenous students passed it. While such tests and their results are controversial and have dubious utility, they are an indication that national literacy strategies are not distributing equitable results for all Australians. However, as Fesl signalled as early as 1982, the issue of Aboriginal literacy acquisition is not as straightforward as the mere provision of appropriate literacy services at various levels from early childhood to adult education (Fesl 1982). Various projects have demonstrated in some detail the dimensions of the issue at both the school and post-school levels. Two such projects that set out to identify where the barriers to Indigenous SAE literacy acquisition might be serve as examples.

The first concerns a project conducted in 1991 which drew on the literature to identify for classroom teachers in the multicultural and multilingual Kimberley region of Western Australia the myriad of points at which an Aboriginal student might potentially be drawing on different linguistic and sociolinguistic codes or traditions. By identifying points of potential Aboriginal language use difference, it was hoped that teachers would be alerted to consider different and more appropriate teaching and assessing strategies rather than merely assuming a language deficit in their pupils. Funded by the Derby District High School's Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committee (ASSPA), Coghill and Taylor (1991) identified 60 per cent of the 387 mastery learning objectives in the school's primary language arts program in which Aboriginal students might be demonstrating mastery differently or require teaching differently from a non-Aboriginal student. This, the authors concluded, was a clear indication that the acquisition of literacy in SAE is not a straightforward exercise for Aboriginal students.

Similarly in the DEET-funded project *The application of the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence to curriculum development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, Taylor (1995a) found that demonstrations of competence in most of the 72 segments of the framework were not likely to be straightforward for Indigenous Australians. While a great deal of the issue concerned familiarity and confidence with the use of SAE, Taylor found that there were more complex cultural and sociolinguistic considerations which would work to disadvantage many Aboriginal adult students' demonstration of SAE language and literacy competence. Fundamental were the implicit notions and assumptions concerning the universality of White middle-class values and aspirations that, despite the rhetoric, were deeply embedded in the Framework.

Not only does there appear a need to view Indigenous literacy as an issue that is of a different order than the mere acquisition and demonstration of SAE oracy but writing also requires additional scrutiny in a consideration of Indigenous language and literacy. As Biddle (1996: 21) points out in a discussion of print literacy and Central Desert painting, the relationship between writing and 'non-writing' has not been explored. She suggests (p 22) that making assumptions about 'illiteracy' in the Central Desert is problematic and points out that very little research has actually described or analysed what Aboriginal Australians do with print literacy outside educational contexts. One of the functions of the acrylic art movement in Central Australia, according to Biddle (p 26), is to redress 'certain tenets' of print literacy by 'insuring against an undifferentiated writing subject'. When Aboriginal people in an era of self-determination insist or prefer Whites do the writing for them, Biddle (p 26) suggests that it may not be evidence of dependence or inadequate literacy or a lack of confidence. 'What may be sought instead is authorisation; "dependency" may be sanctioned, not eschewed'.

So taken for granted is literacy within a Western heritage that the nature of the cultural relationships between the various facets of language and literacy (such as language use, oracy and writing) have remained largely unexamined. Drawing on Foucault's (1984) discussion of the role of writing and the engendering of an individuated culture of self, Biddle, for example, observed that in the Walpiri's eyes writing is for a European destination and that they may not feel authorised to speak to that generalised audience – an acknowledgment that literacy is not a neutral technology. In this sense Biddle suggests (p 27) that Central Australian Aboriginal reluctance to take up print literacy may have more to do with avoiding becoming 'equal "democratic" subjects, either to and with whitefellas, or between themselves'. It may also have something to do with culturally different notions of who has rights to speak, to know and to hear – rights that among Aboriginal Australians in many instances are gendered and largely generational. As Biddle and others working in Australian Indigenous contexts (for example, Rhydwen 1996: 95f) point out, writing standardises the spoken word and thus homogenises speakers, thereby silencing identity-related differentiation. If this is so, vernacular literacy is not likely to improve the rate at which Indigenous Australians take up print literacy. It is not unreasonable to suggest that similar considerations may impinge on attitudes to print literacy in general and writing in SAE in particular in settled Australia.

Furthermore, it is a moot point whether SAE literacy can be taught in the mainstream school in a culturally and politically neutral manner. As Folds (1993: 32) points out in a discussion of the fundamentally assimilatory nature of the self-determination policy, even so-called 'two-way' education (see Harris 1990; Keeffe 1992) which is supposed to offer culturally appropriate curriculum and instruction, 'operates within a narrow spectrum of powerful ideas' and 'ignores the cultural bias endemic in all educational practice' (Folds 1993: 34).

However, if the institutionalisation of most educational practice (regarding literacy teaching in schools, colleges of technical and further education, community education centres and so on) is a hegemonic contextualised practice being resisted, in this case by Indigenous Australians, one would expect there to be some benefits in teaching outside these sites in what might be considered more culturally appropriates settings and drawing on more culturally appropriate teaching–learning processes. However, this is the very area in which cutbacks were recommended in the Green and White Papers of the ALLP. The recommendations to reduce funding for community language programs and to place a heavy emphasis on school-based programs instead, particularly with reference to language maintenance, was roundly criticised in the 1992 HRSCATSIA report *Language and culture – a matter of survival* (1992: 81):

> It is clear that DEET still believed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language could be taught successfully by a predominantly European education system and controlled by that system.

Folds (1993) is not alone in identifying the sociocultural cost embedded in policy and practices purporting to be emancipatory such as self-determination and education. In 1984 among the 'unusually severe impediments to Aboriginal learning' identified in the Colston report were 'conflicts of identity often leading to antagonism toward English, the Aboriginal language [sic] or the educational system in general' (Colston 1984: 84).

At one level the Aboriginal call for provision of SAE instruction in general and literacy in particular is an equity demand to enable Indigenous Australians to access the cultural capital seen to accompany such facility. At another level there are strong pressures operating within Aboriginal society to self-consciously preserve distinctive language use and resist the assimilationist pressures implied in the acquisition and demonstration of SAE language and literacy facility.

Training in literacy and administration has been identified as an area of organisational and administrative breakdown in Aboriginal community management. However, it has also been suggested that the goal of training in literacy and administration could be seen as working to 'subvert the "cultural patterns" and "kinship obligations"...[considered] as impediments to good management' (Rowse 1992: 3). Rowse points out (p 98) that as Aboriginal people, particularly young people, embark on such training and commit themselves to the sorts of careers which such training implies:

> ...they implicate themselves in new ways of achieving personhood and honour. These introduced ways do not simply displace the indigenous ways; the anthropological literature shows clearly that they parallel them, creating new opportunities for brokerage for bicultural people, and setting up tensions, ambiguities and complementarities in the relationships between the norms of [the] Aboriginal domain and those of the institutions of colonial society. To recommend training...is thus to go further than simply imparting the techniques of self-management, techniques intended to be employed as a means to self-determination.

Furthermore, as others have discussed (for example, Sanders 1991), employment and income equity goals, such as those set out in current training policies, while on the surface appearing to be concerned with social justice, in fact contradict self-determination and self-management goals.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other writers are increasingly identifying processes of assimilation and cultural imperialism in the use of the dominant code in teaching and in writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. In this context, the very acquisition and employment of SAE language, literacy and numeracy competence, while at one level empowering, at another constitutes a threat to language and culture maintenance and thus involves a social cost.[4] This is not a situation unique to the Australian Indigenous context. In his discussion of issues involved in language and culture maintenance, Black (1993: 215) cites research by Scribner and Cole (1981) demonstrating the link between changing 'thought patterns' and the impact of literacy, Western schooling and urbanisation. In the Aboriginal context, Black (p 214) points out that new uses of language may lead to 'new patterns of exchange...[and] to changes in the way in which respect and avoidance are signalled in language'. He reflects (p 215):

> One may...wonder about the effects of literacy on Aboriginal cultures, and whether it can cause changes in lifestyle or ways of thinking that people might someday [sic] regret.

In the context of a discussion of Aboriginal self-determination, Folds (1993) has commented that many may not be fully aware of the social cost. The social cost involved in the acquisition of SAE language, literacy and numeracy competence is rarely made explicit. Implicit awareness that the acquisition of language and literacy in English involves more than merely acquiring the mechanics of the language, and that there may be a social cost involved, can generate resistance. Such resistance can unintentionally thwart the process of SAE language and literacy learning. Thus, Aboriginal literacy programs in general, are not simply a matter of including Aboriginal content and idiom. Nor can we guarantee relevance by merely having Aboriginal people doing the teaching, although clearly this is likely to transmit culturally relevant information implicitly and in a more culturally appropriate manner. However, the dynamics of local Indigenous politics make this a fragile situation.

Conclusion

While generally under-funded, the nation's classical Indigenous language heritage has been belatedly recognised in Australian language policy. Policy statements over the last 30 years have also variously indicated an understanding and endorsement of the role non-standard varieties of English such as Aboriginal English plays in identity and cultural maintenance and reproduction. Policy has clearly stated that such language use should be regarded as important and valued as difference rather than deficit. What Australian language and literacy policies have yet to do is privilege investigations into the pragmatics of Aboriginal English use and develop policies that facilitate program development in this sphere and thereby assist to signal a more equitable status for non-standard varieties of English. Perhaps more importantly there needs to be an acknowledgment that Indigenous language and literacy and writing constitute issues of different orders and require clear policy statements derived from a solid research base that can guide program development.

As many writers have strongly asserted, the cycle of illiteracy cannot be addressed until issues of power and privilege are attacked (for example, Lankshear 1992; Giroux 1987; Freire & Macedo 1987). Neither Indigenous nor mainstream policies and statements concerning language and literacy have critically problematised the notion of different sorts of literacies or questions of power inherent in the acquisition of language and literacy by Indigenous Australians. The challenge is how to assist empowering individuals and groups without requiring assimilation to the values and attitudes and behaviours of the dominant group.

Acknowledgment

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Notes

1 Some South Australian schools had introduced bilingual programs in the 1960s but it was not until 1973 that bilingual education was introduced in schools in the Northern Territory under Commonwealth government administration (HRSCATIA 1992: 75).

2 Torres Strait creole is variously known as *broken, pizin, big thap* and/or *blaikman* throughout the Torres Strait Islands (Shnukal 1983a, 1983b: 25–6).

3 The private school system has however made a greater attempt to introduce bilingual education than the Education Department of Western Australia.

4 Gibson (1989: 131), referring to the education of minority groups in Britain and the USA, reports studies demonstrating minority group school students' awareness that school learning is associated with acculturation which ultimately involves the loss of their distinctive cultural identities and the belief that to avoid this they must resist the school.

7

(E)merging discourses at work: Bringing together new and old ways to account for workplace literacy policy

Geraldine Castleton

Introduction

This chapter examines a site, in this case an official document, in which policy around the recently established but expanding domain of workplace literacy has evolved as part of the wider adult literacy and vocational education policy context in Australia. It undertakes a discourse analysis of the workplace, a key focus and locus of literacy policy and practice, and is meant to be read within the wider range of discussion of policy that is the focus of this book.

The area of workplace literacy emerged in response to national and international calls for a more skilled workforce in our rapidly changing, highly technologised and globalised workplaces, as described in contemporary public discourses about 'new times' and the 'new work order' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996; Holland 1998; Castleton 1999). These public discourses about 'new times' and 'new work orders' that argue for a more skilled workforce have been in evidence worldwide for over two decades. Emerging out of these discourses has come yet another, the discourse of a literacy crisis among working adults. This discourse appeared in countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada in the early 1980s (see Street 1984; de Castell & Luke 1986; Graff 1987; Gowen 1992; Freebody & Welch 1993; Hull 1993 1997; Green, Hodgens & Luke 1997) and in the late 1980s in Australia (Freebody & Welch 1993, Castleton 1999; Green, Hodgens & Luke 1997). Its emergence at this time in Australia coincided with, and was part of widespread economic reforms including wage restructuring, the introduction of enterprise bargaining, industry downsizing and dramatic technological advances in workplaces.

Recent examples of the on-going presence of an adult/workplace literacy crisis discourse in the public arena include the Australian Prime Minister's announcement early in 1999 that social security payments for young unemployed people with literacy needs would be dependent on these young people attending literacy training (Howard

1999); while, United States President Clinton, in his January 1999 State of the Nation address *A twenty-first century economy*, spoke of the need to increase federal support of adult literacy provision for people in the workforce (Clinton 1999). A 1999 report commissioned by the British government on the literacy and numeracy needs of adults in England identified the high numbers of adults who are not functionally literate as 'one of the reasons for relatively low productivity in our economy' (Moser 1999: 8).

Discourses such as these that depict a literacy crisis among adults in, or entering, the workforce have led to the rapid development of the field of 'workplace literacy' over recent years. One of the consequences of this rapid development, however, is that this term has achieved a level of 'commonsense' acceptability such that its meanings or constructions have largely gone unchallenged. Its commonsense status is manifest in official reports, policy documents, curriculum materials, teaching texts, academic articles and documented accounts of 'good practice'.

Working in 'new times'

Out of the transformation of work, captured in notions of 'new times' and 'new work orders', has evolved a particular form of capitalism called 'fast capitalism' (Agger 1991: 2) which is conveyed by 'fast capitalist' texts (Gee & Lankshear 1995). These texts, that work to 'create on paper a version of the new work order that their authors are trying hard to enact in the world' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996: 24) by offering what appears to be a rational account of how work must be done in 'new times', are essentially about the material and conceptual redesign of the social relations of the workplace.

The new identities created for workers within the new workplace culture ultimately require workers to display certain personality characteristics and attributes (Lewis et al 1995; Jolliffe 1997) that are more in tune with contemporary work needs, even though these new identities may conflict with workers' individual, personal formations that have been influenced and shaped by a host of linguistic and cultural characteristics. In this sense 'fast capitalist' texts (Gee and Lankshear 1995; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996) may be likened to what Smith (1990: 54) has called the texts of the 'relations of ruling' that bring about a 'virtual reality' around which actions and decisions are aligned. This reality, constituted in a manner that separates social facts 'from the actualities and subjective presences of individuals' (Smith 1990: 62), becomes vested in texts, and decisions and actions are accomplished through distinctive (discursive) practices associated with the reading and writing of these texts.

Exploring a site of 'workplace literacy'

The official government report *Words at Work: Literacy needs in the workplace* (HRSCEET 1991) has been selected as a location for examining how knowledge about workplace literacy has been constructed in Australia, and the consequences of this particular construction. The report (hereafter referred to as *Words at Work*) documents an inquiry into the place of literacy in the workplace. It is a site in which 'knowledge' about (workplace) literacy is presented as a natural and commonsense way of talking and writing about that part of the social world that incorporates literacy and work.

This report forms part of the Commonwealth's metapolicy discourse of corporate managerialism, designed to reconstitute aspects of federalism (Wickert in press: 369) and underpinned by the principle of the state acting 'in the national interest' by bringing together interested parties from the public and private sector as well as trade unions to work for the good of the nation.

The document establishes a conceptual framework for examining workplace literacy. Its account of the link between literacy and work has never officially been disputed in this country and has predominated in policy discourse over the ensuing years (see for example *Working nation* (Keating 1994) and *Literacy at work* (ALLC 1996b)) and up to the present day. Furthermore, the official version of the relationship between literacy and work offered in *Words at Work* remains consistent with those present in other Western nations including the United States (Hull & Grubb 1999) and England (Moser 1999).

Many of the recommendations of *Words at Work* were taken up in the policy document *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) that included provision of federal government funds for workplace language, literacy and numeracy programs. According to Beazley's (1996) analysis of the ALLP (DEET 1991), it claimed to recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Australian community, and did not deal solely with the then Labor government's position on language and literacy within its economic agenda, but also articulated its stance on a range of economic and labour market, multicultural and social justice issues. However, while the document did succeed in putting 'the various Australian language and literacy initiatives together under the bureaucratic gaze and harnesss[ed] them to the merging national training reform agenda' (Lee & Wickert 1995: 65), it also gave primacy to English language proficiency thereby undermining some of the work of the earlier *National Policy on Languages* (NPL). The NPL (Lo Bianco 1987) had adopted a pluralist vision of languages within Australian society, while the ALLP clearly saw those who lack English as being 'outside the mainstream of skills and democratic values – they are objects for assistance and shaping in the economistic national interest' (Moore 1995b: 13).

Words at Work was prepared for the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. In May 1990 this committee was requested by the then Labor Minister for

Employment, Education and Training to inquire into literacy needs in the workplace. Membership of the committee was made up of House of Representatives members from the three major political parties, with the Chair being a member of the party in leadership at that time, the Australian Labor Party. The committee appointed a subcommittee of five of its members (as well as a secretary and two support staff) to conduct the inquiry along the lines of the terms of reference agreed to on 31 May 1990. The inquiry was to examine:

- the impact of low standards of literacy on productivity, safety, self-esteem and skills improvement in the workplace;
- the extent and effectiveness of existing literacy programs; and
- the need for long-term support. (*Words at Work* 1991: 1)

It was advertised in all states and territories of Australia through major metropolitan and regional newspapers. Interested organisations and industries, government departments, members of the government as well as individuals were invited to make submissions. More than one hundred submissions were received by the committee as well as a number of exhibits in the form of audio and video cassettes, project reports, curriculum and teaching materials, teaching manuals, information sheets and academic articles.

Over a period of six months, nine public hearings were held in various locations (covering all the states and the Australian Capital Territory) throughout Australia at which some 63 witnesses, representing various state and Commonwealth government departments, tertiary institutions, industry (employers and unions), education providers and community organisations gave evidence. In addition, a series of inspections of various workplace education centres in a range of locations was conducted and informal talks were held with adult literacy and English language students as well as with teachers involved in workplace basic education programs and with industry representatives. The conduct, outcomes and recommendations of that inquiry are chronicled in the document *Words at Work*, released in March 1991. The report was readily available to interested professionals and the wider public.

Words at Work as an authoritative text

Smith's (1990: 15) argument that official texts present a 'view from the top that takes for granted the pragmatic procedures of governing as those that frame and identify its subject matter' is borne out in *Words at Work*. The document is presented as an account of 'work' in which an explanation is given by the 'speaking subject', namely 'the government' through 'the committee', within its institutional context of ruling, about its 'known subject', that is 'workers'. Various strategies employed in the text are meant to guarantee that the 'truth' and 'commonsense' conveyed by the 'speaking subject' about the 'known subject' is glibly accepted by its readers (Knight, Smith & Sachs 1990: 137). All texts presume an ideal, empathetic reader who holds certain knowledge, interests, values and beliefs, thereby authorising particular meanings (as the truth) over others. This stance is similar to the ethnomethodologists' contention (see Garfinkel 1967; Sacks 1972; Heritage 1984; Hester & Eglin 1997) that members of a culture can draw on a shared cultural knowledge when making sense of a particular topic. The argument put forward here is that texts such as *Words at Work* create certain, official, authoritative forms of knowledge, or 'ways of knowing' a certain topic that become preferred ways by calling on its 'commonsense-ness', thereby shaking off its image of authority and, in Agger's terms, these texts can 'write our lives without the apparent mediation of authority' (1991: 2). Freebody and Baker (1996) argue further that policy-related texts such as *Words at Work* mediate social relations in particularly powerful ways.

Establishing the government as the 'speaking subject' whose democratically sanctioned power and specialised knowledge lend a particular authority to a text is a strategy that sets out to achieve a rational, cohesive reality in the text, thereby reinforcing the appeal of the logic of state policy and its practices (Beazley 1996). Documents whose author is seen to be the state are given a certain privileged status within Australian mainstream culture. This authority is derived 'from its location in the properly constituted structure of authority of government and the superior and specialised knowledge of those…authorised to speak on these issues' (Knight, Smith & Sachs 1990: 138). *Words at Work* legitimates itself in this regard. Its cover depicts two workers, one female, suitably attributed with 'work tools' including hard hats, ear muffs, hammers and tape measures and dressed in 'work clothes', alongside a number of work-related signs and symbols. It bears the Australian Coat of Arms and this, together with the heading 'Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training', confirms its official status. This status is further confirmed on the title page as it bears the additional information 'The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia'. It is worth noting, however, that although a female worker is portrayed on the cover, women as workers are not specifically mentioned in the report. Neither are workers in rural and remote areas or seasonal workers, for example. The consequence of this move is that any knowledge they produce about work and literacy is not included. The reader is therefore meant to conclude that the experiences ascribed to, and descriptions given about, workers in the document generally apply to all workers regardless of factors such as gender or location.

The artful construction of Words at Work

Embedded in the report are what Smith (1990: 74) has called 'inscriptive practices' that are the primary steps in establishing the 'what happened/what is' sense of the report. These practices, outlined in Chapter 1, include techniques and technologies of keeping records, asking questions, taking notes and measuring through the normal practices of interview, investigation, observation and inspection. According to Smith (1990: 174), the questions used to elicit the information or drive the observations and/or inspections are not themselves treated as data but rather as only what is 'seen' or 'heard'. The knowledge presented throughout the report is segmented under numbered, upper case and boldfaced chapter headings, boldfaced section headings and numbered subsections, and extensive use is made of footnotes to acknowledge sources of information. The formatting structure aids the presentation of knowledge in rational, natural ways that attempt to guide the preferred reader along a particular logical path – a world of reasons and consequences – to the exclusion of other interpretations and hence readings of workplace literacy. In this sense the report succeeds in looking like the reports of its predecessor and successive government reports that we have come to expect as conveying 'official knowledge'. Agger (1991) has described such devices as a 'subtext' that contributes to the overall sense of the text. He has argued that one can 'learn to read these gestures not simply as embellishing 'subtext' but also as a central text in their own right, making an important contribution to the argument of science' (Agger 1991: 30).

Words at Work as narrative

Having established its authority to speak on the subject of workplace literacy, this official text proceeds to present a carefully crafted story on its selected topic. A close look at the Introduction to the report enables a sense of 'what is happening here' to emerge. Characteristically, these sections of 'official' texts work to establish the parameters – the version of the real world – within which the document is meant to be read, thus attempting to further verify the document's authenticity and authority.

> International Literacy Year drew attention to the effects of inadequate literacy on personal competence, social cohesion and national performance. Literacy is a moving target, not a fixed one. With the increasing complexity of Australian society, especially in our huge, sprawling cities, people are increasingly dependent on communication and transport systems, and their supporting technology, in order to get to work, to shop, to carry out family and social obligations.
>
> They must be literate in a technological urban context.
>
> The traditional UNESCO definition of literacy as the capacity to read and write a simple letter is not enough in the age of push-buttons, microelectronics, automation and complex packaging.
>
> Literacy involves, as the National Consultative Council for International Literacy year asserted, the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing, critical thinking and numeracy and involves cultural knowledge as well. Australians once accepted the 'lifeboat' model of education – that pupils received a lifetime's supply of education at school and that basic competence was enough. Now we recognise that skills can decay and education needs renewal throughout life.
>
> In its terms of reference, the Committee was directed to examine literacy needs in the workplace, rather than in society as a whole. Nevertheless,

> there are no clear boundaries between work and society so a degree of overlap becomes inevitable.
>
> Studies suggested that more than 1,000,000 adults are functionally illiterate and about 35 per cent of these are native English speakers.
>
> With Australia facing unparalleled competition from trading neighbours with a strong commitment to improved educational standards, the problem of illiteracy is far too serious for a token response. (*Words at Work* 1991: vii)

The work of the Introduction, and of the text in general, is achieved through the application of a set of procedures known as 'objectivity' in which the relations of people's real lives become 'conceived as formal conceptual relations between factors or variables, expressing properties of social objects' (Smith 1987: 152). The document *Words at Work* establishes a selective view of modern day life – one that is increasingly complex and technologically dependent, and therefore making particular, more complicated demands on people's literacy skills. This official version of the social world does not allow for accounts by the people, that is 'Australians', for whom life has not become more complex either at work or outside of work, or for those who may, indeed, not be 'workers' at all. It becomes clear, then, that the report creates a particular social reality, one that privileges work, and is characterised by more sophisticated uses of literacy and by the use of 'push-buttons, microelectronics, automation and complex packaging' (*Words at Work* 1991: vii). In this way the report reflects the views expressed in the 'fast capitalist' texts (Gee & Lankshear 1995; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996) and what Darrah (1992) has called 'future workplace skills literature'.

The overall effect of the Introduction is to establish an official speaker's position, indisputable because of its commonsense logic. This posture then presents a foreboding picture in which Australian workers are seen to be responsible for social cohesion and national economic performance. As pointed out by Smith (1990: 32), the practice of objectivity is not so concerned with 'truth' and 'knowledge' as values as it is with the construction of a particular view of the world and with the accompanying assembly of statements that take on the appearance of a 'body of knowledge'.

Following on from the Introduction, the document relies on a deceptively simple approach to the subject of 'literacy needs in the workplace' by categorising the knowledge about it in the form of answers to four seemingly straightforward questions. This strategy of beginning each chapter with a question becomes a powerful organiser of the version of work built into the text and is quite a sophisticated move as it assists in closing off opportunities for other possible ways of telling or asking about the story. It also means that information to follow is logically presented in the form of statements that help to convey a sense of necessity and obligation. Aligning the subheadings from each chapter with the chapter titles, as shown in Table 7.1, confirms the version of the story being told and which aspects of that story get a privileged hearing:

Table 7.1 The unfolding story

Chapter title	Subheadings
Chapter 1 Background	The inquiry Conduct of the inquiry Scope of the inquiry
Chapter 2 What is the problem?	Working definition of literacy Research – the facts Extent of the problem
Chapter 3 What is the impact?	The costs of inadequate literacy Impact on the individual Impact on the workplace Impact on productivity Impact on award restructuring Impact on society
Chapter 4 What is the cause?	Schooling Immigration Sociological factors Lack of use School literacy and workplace literacy Demands on literacy in the workplace
Chapter 5 How do we fix it?	

This form of presentation of the knowledge contained within the report is strongly reminiscent of traditional story grammars in which the structure of stories is characterised as a set of nodes each of which are connected, either causally or temporally. Stein (1982: 319) argued that basic to the definition of story grammar is the acknowledgment that comprehending the story is an 'interactive process, where prior knowledge of stories influences the representation of incoming new information just as the incoming new information influences the structure of already existing knowledge'. Thus the authors of the report can presume that readers will come to the text with expectations of both the structure of how stories unfold, but also with prior knowledge of its content – Australia's economic woes and their causes.

Consistent with Lyotard's notion that the power of the narrative mechanism is that it confers legitimacy (1989: 321), the document presents itself as an integral element of rational, agreed upon processes that are intended to, and indeed did, result in policy in a range of areas including education, labour market and the economy (see for example the ALLP and *Working nation*). *Words at Work* plainly establishes a particular version of economic imperatives closely tied to individual worker's levels of literacy, and uses the highest authority in the land to achieve this connection:

> This country can't afford to have one million adults unable to perform fairly basic tasks…it's a question of economic common sense. (His Excellency Bill

> Hayden, Governor-General of Australia, February 1990 quoted in *Words at Work* 1991: 20)

Chapter 2 installs the economic narrative with the Australian economy as the protagonist, and enterprises and the workforce, made up of adults and youth, as other main characters:

> Changed international economic conditions have highlighted the need for structural adjustment in the economy particularly in the manufacturing and services sectors. It is essential for enterprises to be more involved in skilling their workforce. The current emphasis on award restructuring is in part a recognition of the need to restructure skills and production methods. There is now general agreement that Australia needs a more flexible and highly skilled workforce capable of maximising its productivity producing quality goods and innovatively exploiting both new technologies and market opportunities. In the drive to achieve these results it has been apparent that poor literacy, numeracy and English language skills of a significant number of adults and youth is an impediment to this occurring. (*Words at Work* 1991:5)

It is a compelling story, the truth of which no 'true Australian' would question, particularly as it is one that has been consistently presented in the popular media. It follows a story line consonant with Gee and Lankshear's (1995: 6) 'fast capitalist' texts and their call for a new capitalism 'based on the design, production, marketing of "high quality" goods and services for now saturated markets'. The only possible way to resolve the plot, that is the only way for Australia to be 'maximising its productivity' as offered in this paragraph, is through a 'more flexible and highly skilled workforce'. However a 'significant number' of adults and youth, with poor literacy, numeracy and English skills, are seen as a serious complication in bringing about this desirable resolution. The narrative contains a certainty about the international economic future, the single and incontestable vision for Australia as part of the international market place, and the need to reconstruct the worker as 'more skilled' in order to manage and exploit new technologies and market opportunities, the imperative for success and the untenable alternative resolution of economic deficiency.

A notable feature of this story is the way in which the success/failure binary opposition is embedded in its plot. The logic of this strategy has been challenged by Derrida (1991) who has contended that the concept of failure is not the opposite of success but is contained within it and aids in understanding the nature of the event. Success as a concept is inadequate in itself as it is motivated by the possibility of failure, is measured in terms of its distance from the existence of failure, and is persistently compromised by activities that result in partial success/partial failure (Beazley 1996: 61). A poststructuralist's examination of notions such as success/failure as more than a binary concept can demonstrate how thinking in terms of dualisms perpetuates essentialist thinking and allows one term to be privileged over the other, highlighting how other kinds of possibilities or potentialities are made invisible.

Conforming to traditional or modernist conceptions of narratives, this section of the economic rationalist narrative performs the task of telling a story about work and literacy. It forms the complication of the plot, identifying the 'obstacles' (some adults with poor literacy, numeracy and English language skills) and a heroic stage (the Australian economy). It then sets the scene to establish the credibility of the heroic characters, depicted as 'the committee' in this text, and to invite the reader to trust the privileged judgment these characters make about other characters, namely 'workers'. The story also makes a strong appeal to what we know about how people (that is workers) normally behave in particular situations (work), thereby further elaborating on the complication (what do we do with workers with poor literacy skills) to be resolved through the story that follows. In this sense the narrative also performs a purpose that Gee and Lankshear (1995: 7) ascribe to 'fast capitalist' texts around the 'developed' world in that they serve to 'attract and change the shape of educational debates...whether these be concerned with vocational and adult education, workplace training and literacy, or schools'. In this instance the narrative is preparing the way for wider government involvement in educational enterprise in Australia.

Categorising workers through Words at Work

An analysis of the ways in which members of society make sense of their world by establishing categories of people to whom certain characteristics are then attributed (Garfinkel 1967; Sacks 1972; Heritage 1984; Hester & Eglin 1992; Jayyusi 1984, 1991; Eglin & Hester 1997) unpacks the practical reasoning involved and draws attention to the kinds of subjects that are represented in the text. It also permits an understanding of the ways in which a particular social and moral order is established in and by the kinds of categories through which people are represented.

A scan of the types of categories established in *Words at Work* and their frequency of use clearly identifies, not surprisingly, that this is a document about 'work', with categories such as 'workers', 'employees', 'employers' figuring prominently. Two other categories also dominate, namely 'the committee' and 'governments', indicating the political context in which the inquiry operated, and the significant role government perceives for itself in this domain. A careful detailing of the attributions made to the categories in the text shows that people classified as 'workers' are predominantly characterised according to their language proficiency, namely as having literacy difficulties. For example:

> For workers to develop the broad based skills required as part of award restructuring it will be essential for continued training to occur. However, without the necessary underlying literacy, numeracy and communication

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> skills many people will be unable to be a part of these developments. (*Words at Work* 1991: 24)

Both non-English speaking background workers and native speakers of English are named as belonging to the category of 'worker with limited literacy skills'. It is not unexpected in a report about the link between work and literacy that categories of people are formed on the basis of their membership, or non-membership of categories assembled through their occupation. However, it is important for the work of the report when the category-bound activities associated with those members are used to give accounts of how work should be done and to explain cases of 'deviance', or breakdowns in social order (Jayyusi 1984).

The discussion of the Introduction has illustrated how the version of work offered in *Words at Work* is inextricably linked to notions of the adequacy of literacy as it is practised at a number of levels. After highlighting the changing international economic context Chapter 2 gives a strong statement outlining the requirements of the contemporary Australian workforce within that context:

> There is now general agreement that Australia needs a more *flexible and highly skilled workforce* capable of maximising its productivity producing quality goods and innovatively exploiting both new technologies and market opportunities.' (my emphasis; National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1989 quoted in *Words at Work* 1991: 5).

This statement locates responsibility for the nation's wellbeing with the workforce, that is 'workers', describing the need for such people to be 'flexible and highly skilled'. These attributes, introduced as category-bound activities and presented as normal courses of actions for workers, are deemed to be both essential and desirable as they are tied to the country's economic success in international markets. Jayussi (1984: 72) would describe 'flexible and skilled' as *visual descriptors* or announcements to which members of a culture are naturally oriented to, and become used as a resource for ways of constructing descriptions and making inferences about the actions of category incumbents. The authors validate their claim for these attributes as self-evident, constituting a shared understanding with readers through the use of the phrase 'there is now general agreement'. In this sense *Words at Work* again aligns itself with the discourses of the new work order established in 'fast capitalist' texts (Lepani & Williams 1991; Boyett & Conn 1992; Darrah 1992; Gowen 1992; Hammer & Champy 1993; Hull 1993, 1997; O'Connor 1994; Gee & Lankshear 1995; Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 1997; Darrah 1997) that carry both social and moral responsibilities for workers to achieve and maintain these attributes.

Poor literacy equals poor work

Having secured this truth as 'taken-for-granted' readers are now able to 'read off' readily and transparently any failure by a categorised member to 'perform the category-bound activity in circumstances warranting its production...to notice its absence and to make some inference about the categorised member's possibly having become an incumbent of a different category' (Jayyusi 1984: 216). The possibility that such an undesirable category may exist is introduced in the next sentence:

> In the drive to achieve these results it has become apparent that *poor literacy, numeracy and English language skills of a significant number of adults and youth* is an impediment to this occurring. (my emphasis; *Words at Work* 1991: 5)

The report then offers various descriptions of 'work as doing literacy' that include using literacy to perform various work tasks such as writing health and safety reports (p 10); reading instructions and warning signs (pp 12, 18, 20, 21); handling dangerous chemicals (p 18); understanding legislation and awards (p 24); and, working as a team member, solving problems and communicating with supervisors (pp 10, 39). Literacy is also determined to be integral to training for or on the job (pp 10, 11, 15) with the importance of being able to participate effectively in training further emphasised by the introduction of award restructuring and its new procedures for promotion (pp 23, 25). Literacy skills are also tied to the process of getting a job (p 15). The report relies heavily on our culturally shared understandings and acceptance of the accounts offered of how work is done, along with the ensuing norms, rights, responsibilities and capabilities of workers therefore ascribed to those who belong to the category of 'worker'.

After establishing the 'fact' that literacy and work are closely linked, the report then draws on a range of substantiation procedures to support its claim that there is a problem with the literacy skills of workers. These procedures include citing research studies (see for example Goyen 1985; Wickert 1989); drawing on official discourses such as local and national surveys; submissions from governments, professional associations, researchers and industry personnel; as well as anecdotal accounts from workplaces. What emerges from this process is a distinct picture of 'workers' and 'potential workers' obviously working outside the parameters of what it means to be 'good workers', that is possessing adequate levels of literacy skills.

There are then many instances in the report where the relationship between a known category incumbent, that is 'worker', and a category-bound display, that is 'skillful', is called upon to entitle observers to ascribe an action – 'poor working habits/workers' – on the basis of the noted absence of the category-bound activity. For example:

> Workers with inadequate literacy, numeracy and language skills have been identified in a wide cross-section of industries and workplaces. While the full extent of the problem is not known the available evidence demonstrates that

> it is an issue of serious concern'. (*Words at Work* 1991: 9)
>
> and
>
> ...low levels of literacy directly influence productivity in several ways. (*Words at Work* 1991: 20)

In fact the document provides the following list (pp 18–19) of the costs and impact of low literacy in the workplace:

- worker safety (such as inability to heed warning signs or handle dangerous chemicals);
- inability to follow written directions;
- possible damage to equipment where the employee cannot read the operating instructions;
- additional time required to give instructions and provide clarification;
- comprehension gaps;
- communication difficulties requiring additional use of supervisory time;
- difficulty in working as a part of a team;
- wasted training provision for those who are unable to comprehend technical materials and resultant cost of remedial programs;
- lost opportunities for promotion;
- less potential for understanding information relating to innovations and technology;
- costly mistakes if employees misunderstand instructions; and
- inability to access further training.

In effect, *Words at Work* establishes a version of knowledge about the place of literacy in the workplace that sees workers, in very particular ways, contributing to the nation's inability to compete effectively in the international marketplace.

The taken-for-granted, commonsense status of this account is further evident through the document's dependence on the 'skills' metaphor. This metaphor is clearly grounded in a functional literacy discourse (Barton 1994b; Castleton 1998) that effectively allows for people to be categorised as 'having skill' or 'not having skill', with specific sets of characteristics being attributed to each category. Even though the authors (the committee) of the report believe that to 'define literacy in terms of vocational competencies (that is, functional) alone is a short-term approach to the problem' (p 5) and that there should be continued effort to 'break down the myths surrounding illiteracy', there are a number of uses of the terms, in its absolutist sense, in the report. The Introduction, for example, notes that significant numbers of adults are *'functionally illiterate'* (my italics) and that 'the problem of *illiteracy* is far too serious for a token response' (my italics), thereby defining subjects as totally lacking in relation to functional literacy. At another point the reader is told that '...in 1991 Australia the labour market no longer offers the same opportunities for unskilled work as it once did for those people who are *illiterate'* (my italics). This statement maintains the link between 'lack of work skills' and absolute 'lack of literacy skills'. There are further instances where subjects who are identified with partial lack of literacy skills are variously and frequently described as having 'lack of adequate literacy skills' (p 13); 'low levels of literacy' (pp 15, 16 19, 20, 25); 'inadequate literacy skills' (pp 3, 9, 14, 20); 'poor literacy skills' (pp 3, 5, 15, 16, 23, 29); 'significant literacy problems' (pp 12, 17); 'literacy difficulties' (pp 7, 9, 11); and 'literacy deficiencies' (pp 13, 15). This official text is not unique in the way it applies the 'literacy as skill' metaphor to separate out and categorise people (in this instance workers). Beazley (1996) has discussed similar uses and effects of this metaphor in her reading of the ALLP (1991).

In many instances the effects of metaphor is reinforced through alliance with the reductive power of metonymy, such as in the example 'the impact of low standards of literacy' (*Words at Work* 1991: 1) which stands in for and does the work of 'low standards of literacy [skills of workers]'. Metonymy, described by Fiske (1990: 5) as 'making a part stand for the whole', along with metaphor are so frequent in everyday language, seemingly representing a commonsense view of the world that they become 'uninspected taken-for-granted assumptions' (Fiske 1990: 94) that stand in for other ways of representing the reality being described. Fiske warns, however, that this work is not 'natural', rather it is ideological: our thinking is being disciplined in ways that are appropriate to the ideology of a work-focused capitalist society that valorises some worker attributes over others.

Drawing on discourses of work as skill

Within the dominant discourse of the role of literacy at work present in *Words at Work* but also evident in a wide range of literature on this topic (Hull 1993, 1997; Hull & Grubb 1999), heavy emphasis is given to notions of skill within individuals. In questioning the concept of skill requirements as a valid way of interpreting and defining work, Darrah (1992: 269) has noted how the literature typically presents the workplace context as an unproblematic 'external backdrop to action that constrains, but is not affected by worker actions'. Consequently, various processes that are internal to the factory floor, and are always involved in generating and reproducing the context in which work takes place, are not acknowledged. Within *Words at Work*, worksites are presented as homogeneous, monocultural settings, thereby obscuring the realities of worksites as settings in which various cultures reside and interact (O'Connor 1994).

Darrah (1997: 251–2) has further disputed the underlying premise that work can be defined, or decomposed, in terms of bundles of discrete characteristics or skills that are determined to be mutually exclusive, but collectively provide a comprehensive description of the job. He has argued that this focus directs attention away from how people, individually and collectively, actually perform their jobs on to whether they individually possess a particular array of skills. Furthermore he has contested the rationality of thinking that suggests that there is some direct, logical way in which identified skills are applied in getting a job done, on the basis of the unlikelihood of workers performing the same tasks having command of exactly the same repertoire of skills, or using them in a precise, identical sequence. Darrah also cautions about the apparent, simplistic exercise of listing skill requirements for work, noting that 'identifying skills requirements is an act of power with enormous organisational consequences'. The whole edifice of skill requirements 'situates blame or responsibility in people and their [lack of] skills instead of in organisational contexts' (Darrah 1997: 267). Arguing for recognition of the cultural diversity of workplaces, Hull and Grubb (1999: 312) have noted that a focus on skills also overlooks 'the complex and contradictory relationship between skills and power'. What counts as 'skilled' versus 'unskilled' is not always determined objectively but rather can be influenced by ideologically influenced categories such as gender and race.

Drawing on discourses of literacy at work as skill

The straightforward representation of workers as possessing inadequate literacy skills for current and future jobs, as presented in *Words at Work*, has been pervasive among the commonly held beliefs on literacy and work over the last decade (Gowen 1992, 1994; Freebody & Welch 1993; Hull 1993, 1997; Hull & Grubb 1999; Castleton 1999). These depictions are grounded in a functional literacy discourse that defines literacy at work purely in terms of the individual skills necessary to complete particular tasks. Just as the unproblematic representation of work as skill can be questioned for the limited understandings it offers of how work is actually done, the linking of the functional literacy discourse to literacy at work can similarly be challenged. Such a portrayal fails to take account of work as social activity, and of the ways in which workers typically rely on each other as they go about their jobs. This process is a fundamental part of social life, both within and beyond workplaces that must be accommodated, rather than be ignored, in understandings of literacy and of work. Furthermore, traditional accounts of literacy at work, that build on the 'literacy as skill' metaphor, derive much of their meaning from underpinning notions of 'deficit', thereby denying a fairer and more accurate representation of the range of attributes workers need, and indeed, have as part of their repertoire of 'worker'. Those accounts of work that demonstrate the rich interplay of literacy practices that do exist in workplaces (see Hull 1997), perhaps best given by workers themselves, are missing from the report. In this sense the report denies any legitimacy that can be given to recent reconceptualisations of literacy as social practice – to understandings of workplaces as 'communities of practice'.

Effects of dominant discourses on workplace literacy

In its role as offering 'official knowledge', and being part of the discourse of government, on a subject deemed as important for and by the government of the day, *Words at Work* has consequential effects on those who are constituted and positioned in that discourse of policy. The version of the world of work presented in *Words at Work* gives prominence to binary achievements, grounded in a functional literacy discourse that focuses on the individual deficit subject. This focus enables distinctions to be made between the 'skilled' (literate) and 'unskilled' (less than literate) that become powerful mechanisms of identification and classification. From this perspective a strong case is made for workers' individual poor work performance, determined on the basis of their literacy competence, being the cause of industry's and the nation's economic and social woes. This limited and limiting means of classification remains predominant in a number of public discourses around education across a range of settings at the end of the twentieth century and into the next millennium.

The effects of the predominant view of literacy at work as represented in *Words at Work* are manifest in preeminence of the functional-context approach to workplace literacy provision. This approach, premised on the functional literacy discourse that constitutes literacy skill as a set of identifiable skills that can be measured and related to specific job tasks, has been popular in a number of Western nations including the United States (Gowen 1992, 1994; Hull 1993, 1997; Hull & Grubb 1999), the United Kingdom (Holland 1998) and Australia (Pearson et al 1996; Castleton 1999). Though recent writings have identified workplace programs that operate with far richer and more meaningful formulations of literacy, these programs as yet do not represent mainstream delivery. The challenge for the future of workplace literacy is to contest and resist the officially favoured focus on individual deficit subjects and therefore to overcome the possibility of workplace literacy becoming what Foucault (1980) would describe as a disciplinary discourse designed to legitimate and sustain certain forms of power/knowledge.

Part 4

Policy and the contexts of practice

8 The melody changes but the dance goes on – tracking adult literacy education in Western Australia from 'learning for life' to 'lifelong learning': Policy impacts on practice 1973–1999

Margaret McHugh, Jennifer Nevard and Anthea Taylor

Introduction

Over the last ten years alone, the professional and federal policy discourse has moved from a focus on language to language and literacy and on to learning for life. Currently much adult literacy provision is assessment driven. There has been a move away from curriculum to focus now on qualifications and documentation of skills and units of competence. What prompts the changes, who do the changes benefit and how do they impact on the financing, planning and delivery of literacy programs in institutions and the community?

This chapter identifies some of the interest groups and stakeholders and examines the history of adult literacy provision in Western Australia between 1973 and 1999. We track some of the larger policy changes that impacted on selected areas of adult literacy provision over the period. Among the issues examined are local responses to shifts in federal policy and funding and the degree of congruence between policy and implementation at delivery level in Western Australia.

The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section we locate adult literacy provision within technical colleges in the mid-1970s and examine the relationship between the volunteer tutor scheme and formal courses in adult literacy which operated as an expansion of offerings in the subjects English or Communications Studies within General Studies departments in technical colleges. We show how the field of adult literacy, encouraged by earmarked special-interest federal funding, became somewhat splintered into separate administration and other forms of demarcation (such as being different for various client groups). These activities were also characterised by competition for funding amongst agencies that provided courses, for example, for non-English speaking background, Indigenous, disability, and English in the workplace students. Energy that might have been directed towards furthering agreed goals was consumed in a race for funding.

Case studies of the Western Australian Adult Literacy Council (WAALC) and two target client areas - adult Aboriginal education and adult migrant education - illustrate this splintered profile and similarities and differences relating to theory and practice. A Freirian discourse was at times employed to offer a humanitarian justification for activities; however, programs, pedagogy and materials remained couched in notions of second-chance opportunity, compensatory interventionism, assimilation and functionalist education.

The second section of the chapter examines the bureaucratic arrangements set up within a state departmental equity and access directorate and focuses particularly on the post-1990 period. We trace the impact of increasing national policy influences and a new injection of Commonwealth funding. The move toward credentialism and skills recognition, and a labour market focus in adult literacy policy and programs also brought particular kinds of changes to activity in the west.

In the third section we examine some of the factors which might have impacted on adult literacy development, coordination and articulation - the development of a professional association, professional training and a research base. We trace the development of the *National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia* in Western Australia and argue that this provided a window of opportunity to significantly impact on the adult literacy field in that state.

In the final section, we draw on this historical narrative to tease out fundamental issues that have pervaded the Western Australian scene over the last 30 years. Emergent but interconnected and overlapping issues that illustrate that indeed the melody may change but the dance stumbles on include those issues related to the nature of the slippage between theory and practice and the nature and location of the adult literacy field itself.

In addition to published works and archival documents, data for this chapter are drawn from interviews with individuals working in adult literacy over the period under consideration. Each of the authors has drawn on her long involvement with various facets of the adult literacy field in Western Australia.

The profile of adult literacy activity in WA 1973–1983

Adult literacy classes

The 1970s marked a period of economic downturn in Australia. After two decades of plentiful employment, unemployment became an issue for ensuing governments to address. By 1975 unemployment was above 4 per cent, (ABS 1977). It was a fertile climate for concerns about literacy levels of English speaking Australians to be heeded, particularly when they could be attached to labour force concerns. The working philosophy for adult education classes in Western Australia has and continues to resonate with the economic conditions of the times. It has focused on the value of delivering a compensatory education to the individual that might provide students with a *second chance* to gain job marketplace skills in an environment of rising unemployment.

Therefore in 1975, the first classes in adult literacy started at Perth Technical College on St Georges Terrace in the central business district. The recruiting language introduced a new term: a 'remedial English teacher' was sought. The naming of the activity compared interestingly with the term 'remedial reading' used in the school system. The difference in terminology may have been a result of the technical education sector demonstrating sensitivity about adults who wished to improve their literacy skills. At the same time, the choice of the term 'remedial English' indicated the new activity's location in the existing technical education structure.

The terminology of adult literacy in federal documentation over the thirty-year period between 1970 and 2000 shifted from the use of 'English language' to 'language and literacy' and then to the term 'learning for life' to describe the situation of people in Australia who had low proficiency in English language and literacy. Over a similar time span, Western Australian adult literacy delivery terminology moved from a focus on the subject English and then Communications Studies to terms such as Basic Education and General Education to indicate the breadth of skills and knowledge being addressed under the adult literacy umbrella. The difference in terminology applied in federal and state documentation marks contrasting histories and client group preoccupations.

Classes providing basic literacy skills were developed by the English departments within General Studies sections of Western Australian technical colleges. A curriculum for those with an English speaking background and another for those from a non-English speaking background (NESB) were written in 1978. These programs remained in place until the mid-1990s when a more comprehensive curriculum was imported from Victoria. From the 1970s to the early 1990s, students generally attended a couple of times per week to chalk up approximately six hours per week of tuition.

Sometimes committed learners attended classes over an extended time span. While these classes offered an opportunity for learners to become more independent in their speaking, reading and writing of English, the classes also served technical education's interests. Entry level classes provided fertile recruitment grounds for students to undertake further studies within the sector. Ironically, *further* education became an all too apt a description for the protracted learning pathways on offer, and the complex suites of preparatory studies subjects available. The hierarchy of subjects included: Adult Literacy, English 1L for NESB students, English 1K for English speakers, Sub-tertiary Entrance Studies and Tertiary Entrance classes. English 1L and 1K were further divided into entry, intermediate and advanced levels. Students often attended for more than one year and so the development of a curriculum where students could attend full-time and achieve vocational entry level skills after 12 months of study was a welcome adjustment to arrangements in the 1990s.

Western Australian literacy providers put their energies into developing teaching methodologies based upon classroom strategies initially designed for children and subsequently modified for adult situations. Classroom strategies devised by academics, Ross Latham and Peter Sloan from Claremont Teachers' College (later Edith Cowan University) were applied to adult learning requirements. The what and how of adult literacy provision were impressively addressed.

A volunteer literacy tutoring scheme

Very soon after adult literacy courses were initiated in technical colleges, a volunteer literacy tutoring scheme was formed to provide one-to-one tutorial assistance to people wishing to improve their English language and/or literacy proficiency. The stimulus for the scheme came from local technical education General Studies teachers and it was through the efforts of state government providers within the sector that the volunteer agency got off the ground. Literacy support schemes that had developed in the United Kingdom formed a model to follow. Volunteers from the community were recruited and provided with training using materials developed from the classroom strategies recommended by Latham and Sloan (1979, 1981).

Originally, the scheme was coordinated centrally but by the early 1980s the process for developing local volunteer branches had commenced. A modest amount of federal funding was put aside as running costs for local branches. This allowed for the funding of small resource purchases and reimbursing costs for telephone usage. At any one time, more than 1,000 trained tutors were registered in about 30 local branches across the state. Volunteers from a variety of education and life experience backgrounds offered their services. They worked one-to-one with a learner who had sought assistance with English language or literacy. The scheme relied on high levels of trust that a tutor would have the skill and appropriate values to assist the learner. Tutor quality control remained a constant challenge. Despite this, numbers of Western Australians achieved a specific goal or a level of independence with spoken and written English that they would otherwise have not acquired.

While the service relied on community support in order to function effectively, it had not started life as a community initiative. The service became a reality through technical education academic staff successfully arguing a case for providing literacy and numeracy assistance to apprentices who were at risk of failing their studies as a result of having poor entry level skills. As these students were already within the technical education sector, the justification for the service was that it would harness community support to further the interests of students in that sector.

A lobby and support organisation for adult literacy practitioners

In the late 1970s the Western Australian Adult Literacy Council (WAALC) was formed. Similar organisations had been established in some eastern states. A national coordinating organisation was also established in the same year. Membership of the local association comprised paid literacy workers and volunteer tutors. Volunteers outnumbered paid workers in the adult literacy 'industry' and so the platform for the organisation was to address the issues of both groups. The nature of the organisation's

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ABSTRACT

This book presents the dynamics of language and literacy policy activism in Australia. The introduction is "Activists and Policy" (LoBianco, Wickert). Part 1, "From Policy to Anti-Policy" (LoBianco), sets a frame and overarching context of the pattern of Australian language and literacy policy. Part 2 contains accounts of how policy activists learned to become more effective in influence and text production, including "Australia's Language" (Brock); "Politics, Activism, and Processes of Policy Production" (Wickert); and "Although It Wasn't Broken, It Certainly Was Fixed" (Moore). Part 3 explores different approaches to understanding how policy problems and solutions are constituted in particular kinds of ways with an intention to generate desired solutions. Included are "Advocating the Sustainability of Linguistic Diversity" (Singh); "Cost of Literacy for Some" (Taylor); and "(E)merging Discourses at Work" (Castleton). Part 4 concerns what happens in different contexts as an application of the wider principles. The papers are "Melody Changes but the Dance Goes on" (McHugh et al.); "Sleight of Hand" (Falk); "National Literacy Benchmarks and the Outstreaming of English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners" (McKay); "Open for Business" (Kell); "Inventiveness and Regression" (Ozolins); "Deafness and Sign Language in Government Policy Documents 1983-90" (Power); "Imprisoned by a Landmark Narrative?" (Childs); "Ideologies, Languages, Policies" (Scarino, Papdemetre); and "Reconciled to What?" (Nicholls). Part 5 is "Sing Out That Song" (Frawley), a paper that explores the concept of print literacy as being socially and culturally driven and its positioning as a variable social technology in the context of an Aboriginal community. Appendixes include abbreviations and 620 references. (YLB)

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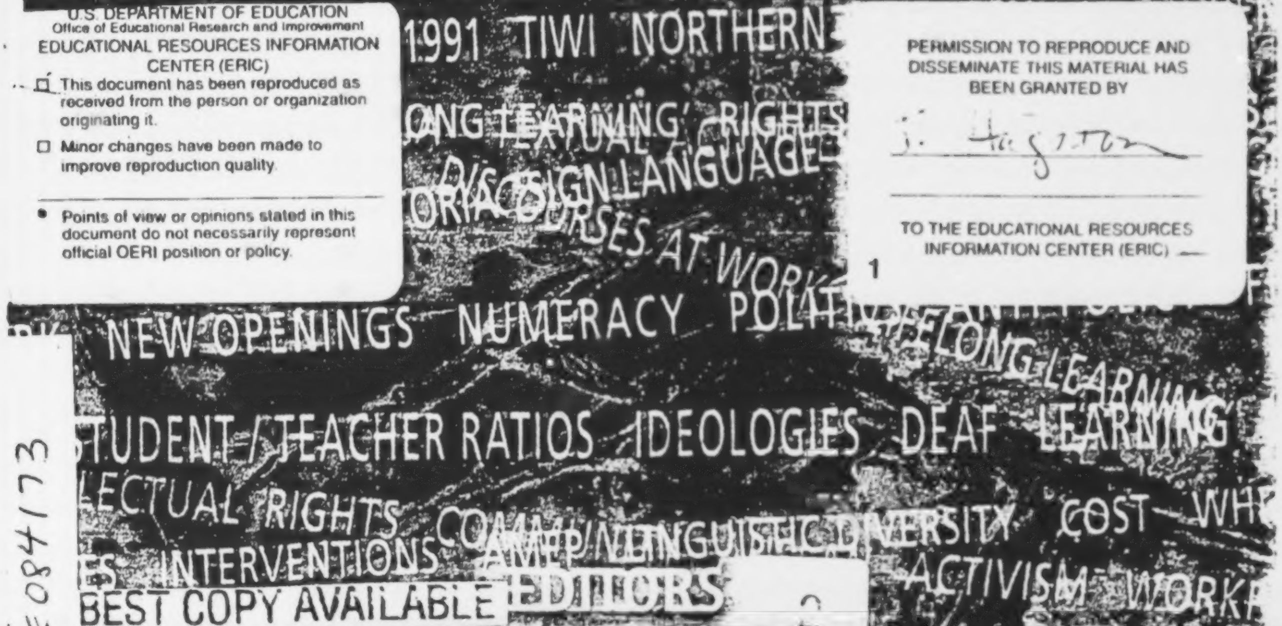
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EDITORS

JOSEPH LO BIANCO & ROSIE WICKERT

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Australian Policy Activism
in
Language and Literacy

Editors
Joseph Lo Bianco and Rosie Wickert

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Preface

Language policy development in Australia boasts a long history of strategic alliances. The success of these alliances can be measured by Australia's internationally renowned and respected, as well as envied, suite of national policies and practices concerned with issues of language and literacy. The 13 years between the election of the Hawke Labor government and the Howard Coalition government's re-election in 1996 spans a critical time for public policy concerned with such matters. While in Britain and the United States conservative governments restricted the scope and reach of education public policy and discouraged moves towards language pluralism and public policies for adult literacy and language, Australia enthusiastically, if not altogether unproblematically, embraced government intervention in these fields. More than 15 major public policies, position statements and significant programs directing public resources towards language and literacy goals were released during this period.

The achievement of policy commitments such as these provided a focus for language policy advocates, but this network has weakened alongside a loss of government confidence in specialist expertise and advice. The flux of the contemporary moment, along with the election of a more conservative federal administration, has unsettled the stability and efficacy of the alliances of activists concerned with issues of languages and literacy, particularly as they concern adult populations. It is timely, then, to capture some accounts of many of those most deeply engaged in Australia's distinctive practice of language and literacy policy-making.

The genesis of this publication was a forum designed to provide a focused opportunity to bring together a significant number of people actively interested in language and literacy policy and its effects. This forum, held in early 1999, was a joint initiative of the Language, Discourse and Policy Research Group which comprises members of the Centre for Language and Literacy at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, the Chief Executive of Language Australia and an adjunct professor at UTS, as well as Professor Bill Green of the University of New England. The UTS Language, Discourse and Policy Research Group brings together a cohesive group of people whose work is rapidly consolidating a distinctive profile both across Australia and internationally. This distinctiveness is achieved by breadth of focus, from primary school to higher education and beyond, and the multidisciplinary character of the research interests of the group, along with an active research interest in the trajectory of research findings into policy realisation.

This interest in policy realisation underpinned the forum. It arose from conversations between Bill Green and the editors of this book about the significance of the dynamics of languages, literacy and policy activism in Australia, and the lack of a focused space to meet and explore these dynamics. As it turned out, the forum attracted many participants active across the spectrum of language related policy. Not all of these people are represented here, for various reasons. Originally it was planned to produce a companion and supplementary work to this — however, as that may not happen, we want to take this opportunity to thank all the participants from the original forum, those who have written in the present volume and those whose work does not appear here, for participating in what was certainly a most generative and challenging event.

Joseph Lo Bianco
Rosie Wickert

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to acknowledge with gratitude Jo Karmel, Freelance Editor, Canberra, Dr. Maurice Nevile, Researcher, Language Australia, Nicole Hayes, Publications Officer, and Gabrielle Markus, Desktop Publisher, Language Australia.

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Dr Geraldine Castleton is Research Fellow in the Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research at Griffith University, Brisbane. Her research and publications focus mainly on the relationship between literacy policy and practice in a range of contexts. Her contribution to this book draws on her doctoral studies and takes up this focus in the workplace context.

Merilyn Childs is a Lecturer in Adult Education at the University of Western Sydney Nepean. She is a career educator and educational researcher, and has worked for two decades in high schools, TAFEs and university, the corporate sector, and community and social services. Underpinning the thesis of her chapter is a strong interest in strengthening the agency of local, grassroots educational workers as they struggle with the decay of public education and secure employment, and the dilemmas produced by government policy in globalised times.

Associate Professor Ian Falk is the Director of the national Key Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania. His research interests are in adult literacy, social capital, trust, leadership and social cohesion, learning, sociology, sociolinguistics and ethnomethodology. He has many publications consisting of academic and practical papers, book chapters and books on a range of topics. These topics cover, broadly, ways to enhance socioeconomic well-being through developing and strengthening social capital by fostering lifelong learning in communities, workplaces and in civic spheres.

Dr Jack Frawley has had extensive experience in cross-cultural education working in Kiribati in the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea, and Australia. He has worked for over 14 years in Aboriginal adult education in the Northern Territory. His main research interests are in Northern Territory Aboriginal culture, history and education. He has recently completed his PhD in social science at the University of Western Sydney.

Associate Professor Peter Kell is Head of the Department of Industry Professional and Adult Education at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University. Until recently he was the Program Manager of Adult and Vocational Education at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, James Cook University, Townsville. His research has primarily been in the area of adult literacy and vocational education. Peter Kell has written and researched on training markets and the work of teachers and educational providers in response to the marketisation of education. His most recent work includes research on the context of the open training market.

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco is Chief Executive, Language Australia and Professor, Education, University of Melbourne. His research interests are language policy and planning, multilingualism and bilingualism in social context, language and conflict, and literacy policy. During 1999 he wrote the National Language Education Policy for Sri Lanka under World Bank financing, and in 2000 he was a commissioned adviser on language education policy in Scotland and Northern Ireland. He was awarded the Order of Australia for his work on language policy in Australia and internationally; Commendatore nell'ordine di merito della republica italiana by the President of Italy for his work on Australia-Italy cultural relations, and was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities in 1999. His doctoral research was on the Official English movement in the United States.

Associate Professor Penny McKay is Coordinator of the TESOL Unit, School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education at Queensland University of Technology, and is currently the President of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations. She has published extensively on the teaching and assessment of ESL students in schools, being well-known for the development of the NLLIA ESL Bandscales (Language Australia, 1994), a set of staged descriptions of progress in English in the context of schooling, and for related discussions of policy and practice concerned with long-term monitoring of ESL students through their schooling.

Helen Moore is a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada. Prior to this she was Senior Lecturer in Education at La Trobe University, Melbourne. She was jointly responsible for the teacher education program in TESOL at La Trobe University including a special entry scheme for people with degrees from non-English speaking countries. Her chapter results from her ongoing work towards her thesis which applies governmentality theory to language education issues. Helen has been a long-standing activist in language education policy in Australia.

Dr Christine Nicholls is a Senior Lecturer in Australian Studies and Head of Cultural Studies at the Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide. Before that she worked as Principal Education Officer, Bilingual Education (Aboriginal Languages) in the Northern Territory Department of Education. Prior to that she worked for almost a decade as the Principal of Lajamanu School, a large Warlpiri Aboriginal school in the Tanami Desert of the Northern Territory. Christine's research interests include

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sociolinguistics, issues surrounding the survival and maintenance of Australian (that is, Aboriginal) languages, Australian politics and art (particularly Indigenous art and music).

Dr Uldis Ozolins is currently Lecturer in Politics at La Trobe University, Melbourne. He is author of The politics of language in Australia (CUP, 1993) and has written extensively on a range of language issues including language policy, ethnicity and language, and interpreting and translating, both in Australia and internationally. He also runs his own consultancy 'Language solutions'.

Dr Leo Papademetre is a Senior Lecturer at Flinders University of South Australia (School of Humanities, Department of Languages) and a researcher with the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education in Schools at the University of South Australia. He has an ongoing research interest in the theory and practice in linguistics/sociolinguistics, intercultural education, and language–culture teacher training.

Dr Des Power is Emeritus Professor of Special Education and former Director of the Griffith University Centre for Deafness Studies and Research and the Language Australia Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies. He has had a long-term interest in sign language, Deaf Studies and communication in the Deaf community and their perception in the hearing community.

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Professor Michael Singh is Head of the Department of Language and International Studies, Faculty of Education, RMIT University, Melbourne. In 1998–99 he developed an innovative bachelors degree in international studies that explores the cultural dimensions of the interrelated processes of globalisation and localisation. He is particularly interested in the significant role language and culture play in the inherited effects of imperialist and colonial power on contemporary transnational culture and cosmopolitics. His current research projects include Australian Research Council funded studies into students' uses of international education and the changing nature of the English language teaching business.

Dr Anthea Taylor lectures in education in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Western Australia in Perth and has also worked in adult literacy and adult Aboriginal education curriculum and instruction. Her research interests include vocational education and training (VET), political literacy and Aboriginal education.

Associate Professor Rosie Wickert works at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has been active in the field of adult basic education for 20 years and has acted in a consultative capacity to government departments and at UNESCO and OECD Expert meetings. She was foundation Chair of the Australian Literacy Federation and has been

President of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy and the NSW Council for Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Her research interests and publications are primarily concerned with policy issues and her PhD was in adult literacy policy analysis.

Introduction:
Activists and policy politics

Joseph Lo Bianco and Rosie Wickert

Some early analyses of the evolution of Australian language and literacy education policy identified the role of intellectuals in the making or influencing of policy (Quinn 1968; Ozolins 1985, 1993; Lo Bianco 1989; Clyne 1991c). The intellectuals were usually professional linguists but also included teachers. At first their role was individualistic and unorganised but gradually grew to be sustained and systematic. The impact of these intellectuals has been complex and not always easy to discern, nor has it been unidirectional, with the possible exception that intellectuals engaged in advocacy have tended to favour explicit public statements on language and literacy.

The role and impact of intellectuals, and the kinds of professionalised knowledge that they contribute to processes of policy generation and policy text production, is one theme that is taken up in this book in a sustained way and from multiple perspectives. This is, in part, a reflection of the efforts of the sustained alliance of intellectuals and others who worked for the achievement of an Australian language policy oriented to building a nation engaged with its linguistic and cultural diversity, and that culminated in the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987).

Activism is a recurrent theme in the chapters of this book. Some take a broader view of this construct than others who see activism as aligned with more traditional notions of outsider resistance politics. Yeatman (1990) develops an argument that 'policy' activism, as distinct from political activism, is activism oriented to democratically oriented interventions across the range of activities which make up the policy process. This is an activism available to all players in this process, insider and outsider. Thus, to specify and discuss the separate role of intellectuals requires us also to consider the roles of professional policy-makers, policy practitioners (invariably public officials but also ministerial staff and advisers) and also community and professional activists. Furthermore, to discuss the role of different occupational categories on the processes and outcomes of public policy is to raise the related and complex problem of how to analyse policy.

We may choose to study public policy problems and processes as observers, but we need to be conscious of our roles as active participants in influencing policy or, even more directly, in making policy. This question gives rise to procedural and methodological questions, but it is also a matter of ethical principle, since engagement with public policy processes does not afford scholars the space of distance and critical removal afforded by other kinds of scholarship. Some chapters in this book address the dilemmas and issues that emerge from these considerations directly, while others reflect on these questions because the authors (or the stories and analyses they relate) were present in the moments when policy was made and enacted. The book becomes, therefore, simultaneously documentary, reflective and self-reflective.

Policy texts are produced within and influenced by particular contexts. The work of the production of the policy texts, and the development of the policy directions under examination here, were undertaken in a period of rapid transformation of the functions of public sector management. In organising the presentation of the material we have made use of some of the categories and distinctions found in the work of Stephen Ball and his colleagues (Bowe, Ball & Gold 1992; Ball 1993). According to this work, policy contexts have both material properties and discursive properties, each of which have both enabling and constraining effects. In a detailed analysis of the work of Ball and his colleagues, Gale makes the observation that, 'Not only do different contexts attribute different meanings to policy text — given their different textual and discursive collections which invest them with meaning — but they also offer different material possibilities' (1999: 412).

There are two points to be made about this quote which are pertinent to this book. The first is that Gale's observation offers an explanation for some of the different reading of policy effects that follow. The second is that the interplay between text and context is not a predictable one. As Ball later observes about the model of the three contexts of policy-making that he and his colleagues developed in 1992 — contexts of influence, contexts of text production and contexts of practice — 'there is no simple direction of flow of information' between them (Ball 1994a). Gale goes further by suggesting that they should be conceptually reconceived, in a more fluid way, as embedded within each other.

This is to make the point then that, although we use Bowe, Ball and Gold's original model as an organising mechanism for the chapters that follow, this should not be read as an attempt to 'fix' them in any one policy context. Guided by these considerations, the book contains multiple readings and perspectives of the policies in question. What perhaps makes these accounts so distinctive is that they are all grounded in the concrete experience of the Australian federal policy initiatives of recent decades.

The trajectory that we cover is essentially the recent Australian experience. This is periodised roughly as a thirty-year period, from the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 to the election of the Howard Coalition government in 1996, although there is more attention on the later years. This period has been one of intense state involvement in the promulgation of public declarations of intent and action in relation to various language and literacy questions. It is our view that during this period there emerged an unselfconscious pattern of policy-making; the state exhibited a strong belief that the mechanism of overt and deliberate policy enunciations was appropriate and productive of its role in education, training policy, social policy, immigration, Indigenous affairs and the general management of cultural relations.

The promulgation of policies to achieve explicitly articulated objectives of social management, whether confirmed or disconfirmed in subsequent modifications to policy, set a pattern for the whole period. We also believe that while this is not unique in the world, it does constitute a distinctively Australian experience — we can think of no other comparable national setting in which language and literacy policy has been so energetically recruited to the causes of government management of these fields. It is also our view that this kind of social reconstruction work via the means of policies in the fields of language and literacy has required encounters between practitioners of policy, and academics, researchers or scholars in a kind of dialogue that exchanges power, knowledge, and organised arguments for mobilising public resources. The dialogue that is enabled by a commitment to explicit policy-making is possible only in democratically oriented polities in which wider strata of society are admitted into productive dialogic relations. While these relations are not always cordial, they require a common commitment to the activity that makes them possible, and they abjure the kind of antagonism that makes dialogue impossible.

This kind of orientation, one of policy-making via the mutually influencing dialogue of various parties, sees policy essentially as a kind of organised argumentation. To achieve this means that some tendencies in scholarship need to be set aside. One of these sees the professional cultures of policy-makers and of academic experts as being like incommensurate worlds in which there are sharp divisions between practitioners who deal with power to make and implement policy, and observers/analysts who generate and trade in 'knowledge'. This kind of intellectual relativism would make authentic and effective dialogue both unnecessary and difficult. Next to this kind of relativist understanding we need also to reject a kind of dogmatism that makes policy only a power exercise, and that makes its analysis only a perspective of 'objectivity', for these terms make dialogue impossible. Policy dialogue is both necessary and possible, and engagement is feasible and, indeed, has been a feature of the Australian language and literacy policy experience.

Part 1: Openings

In this section we intend to set the overall framework and introduce some key terms and ideas that recur throughout the book. The chapter that makes up this section reflects very strongly the dilemma and also the inevitability that 'insider accounts' and analyses are common in Australia, and that these will play a crucial role in how we understand what has happened, and how we imagine effective practice for the future. This first chapter is not descriptive of the period of time that it addresses, but rather seeks to analyse, from its author's direct engagement in all the main phases under analysis, overarching themes, politics and characteristics of the period being examined.

Chapter 1: Lo Bianco sets a frame and overarching context of the pattern of Australian language and literacy policy. Influenced by the experience of participation, he raises questions of standpoint, and practitioner understandings, that is, knowledge that is intrinsically connected to doing. Specifically Lo Bianco discusses the 'remit', 'scope', 'content' and 'style' of the dramatic policy developments during the1990s. He argues that these points of entry into analysing the specific policies of this period reveal a broader and underlying pattern of restrictionism. The discussion is opened, therefore, with some concepts, terms and arguing points which seek to theorise orders of discourse common to specific policies that may otherwise purport to be very different from each other. It connects the evolution of Australian policies in this area from the 1970s Whitlam government and Fraser government practices of bringing community interests into a policy-making dialogue with executive government, to the pattern of the 1990s in which government has distanced community activism, preferring a more 'managed' process of policy determination.

Part 2: Processes, politics and the effects of policy text production

From the opening section we move to address the policy process, in two connected but distinct modes. The first is how policy texts come about, and the second addresses the various policy influencing contexts. In relation to how policy texts are produced, the chapters traverse territory that includes the common sense model of lobbying from without, and also the work undertaken within ministers' offices. Policy texts are produced within particular kinds of contexts: public officials and bureaucracies have undertaken determinative roles in a period of rapid transformation of their functions. This has required a kind of policy learning (a policy literacy) for lobbyists, professional bodies and others wanting to influence the content and ideologies of those texts, but also a learning for the writers of those texts themselves. Bureaucracies have had to change from the more rigid hierarchies in which ministers were the sole policy determiners, to ones where multiple layers of decision-making exist, and policy responsibility is dispersed throughout layers of the bureaucracy. This section is indicative of this new complexity of the policy process, and contains both descriptive accounts, as well as examples of particular kinds of policy discourses. In other words, it contains accounts of how policy activists learned to become more effective in the contexts of influence and text production, the specific kind of rationalities that these involve, and also the processes that have produced given policy texts.

Chapter 2: Paul Brock's insider's account of the production of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) is a view specifically from 'within the Minister's office' of an important phase in the engagement of the Australian government with language and literacy. While abiding by the ethical norms of non-disclosure of classified confidential information, such as contained in cabinet submission papers or accounts of discussions/debates within cabinet, Brock includes a discussion of the main players in the bureaucracy: the federal parliamentary Labor Party, the Minister (John Dawkins) and some representative advisory structures. Brock also considers the main texts and some of the key issues that were addressed in this process. And there is a reflection of the disparate and multifaceted roles of intellectuals, activists and policy practitioners. His narrative of the experience from within the Minister's office sits strongly within the contexts of influence and the complex processes of text production that occupies our interest in this section of the book.

Chapter 3: Strongly motivated by the experience of participation, Rosie Wickert raises questions of observer versus analyst – reflective engagement with things as they happen – and the struggle to understand what it means to be engaged in the processes of policy production. Specifically, Wickert analyses the policy on adult literacy in Australia as it took shape from the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) to *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) and beyond. She explores how the history of adult literacy policy in Australia connects both with the work of activists in the fields of language and literacy, as well as with the global agendas of the OECD. Reflecting on the complexity of the effects of these policy initiatives, Wickert provides some telling instances of the mutually influencing and shaping relations of the contexts of influence, production and interpretation.

Chapter 4: In her discussion of five years of policy intervention into the AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program, 1991–1996), Helen Moore draws on interviews with government officials and educators to analyse a struggle for its control and operations. As with other contributors, Moore's work is similarly motivated by a desire to better understand the experience of being involved in the policy turbulent years following the adoption of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991). Drawing on the work of Miller and Rose (1993), Moore argues that policy claims to be representative of a reality and, at the same time, to be seeking to change that reality — to 'make reality better'. Furthermore, the representation is likely to be one that enables particular understandings of what is 'better' to be enacted. Moore's analysis of the dominant policy moves at the time, alongside the accounts of those involved, clearly, in her words, 'enlarge the possibilities for understanding' what happened to the AMEP.

Taken together, Brock, Wickert and Moore provide a variegated analysis of the processes of making policy in democratic settings, albeit settings where it is clear that asymmetries of power and influence are persistent and real.

Part 3: Policy positions

This section explores different approaches to understanding how policy problems and solutions are constituted in particular kinds of ways with an intention to generate desired solutions. Thus these various accounts demonstrate how the constitution of the policy problem is a kind of politics.

Chapter 5: Michael Singh's chapter offers a connection between policy and the kinds of national cultural imagery and identity that have been publicly contested and affirmed during the period we consider. Especially powerful is the identification of Asian immigration and the authorised speaking positions around languages other than English, made all the more salient by the elevation of Asian commercial languages to national policy primacy. Such ascribed priorities in policy indicate the subtle shifts in the construction of both Asia, and who Australians, inscribed in policy about Asian languages, are taken to be.

Chapter 6: In this chapter, Anthea Taylor reviews references to Indigenous Australian language and literacy in policy statements over the last 30 years, and argues that neither policy nor practice has been able to find a praxis which adequately takes account of, on the one hand, the stated Indigenous desire for Standard Australian English (SAE) language and literacy competence, and, on the other hand, the inherent assimilationist project embedded in the acquisition and the 'artful construction' of the demonstration of SAE competence.

Chapter 7: Geraldine Castleton analyses the central importance allocated to the workplace context of adult literacy policy. Drawing on Dorothy Smith's (1990) notion of texts of the 'relations of ruling' that bring about a 'virtual reality' around which actions and decisions are then aligned, Castleton undertakes a detailed analysis of one policy document. Through this, she identifies the discourses of deficit that characterise and provide a major rationale for federal government involvement in language policy, via the production of a workplace literacy crisis narrative.

Taken together, Singh, Taylor and Castleton demonstrate how discourses work to enable and constrain policy possibilities in Australian policy work in language and literacy: Australian-Asian interpretations; mainstream-Indigenous relations; literacy and labour market connections and state-federal connections.

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Part 4: Policy and the contexts of practice

This section concerns fields of impact for public policy, that is, what happens in different contexts as an application of the wider principles. Evident here are the goals of a diverse range of interest groups and the aspirations they had for particular aspects of language and literacy policy, and how these aspirations have fared over the period of time addressed for public policy. The contributors to this section take various positions in their analyses of the impact of the policy moves they examine. What they demonstrate is the unruly nature of policy — the non-linear relationship between policy intent and policy impact.

Chapter 8: Margaret McHugh, Jennifer Nevard and Anthea Taylor provide a detailed account of the diverse impacts of increased funding in the area of language and literacy. In assessing this, they note how relatively ineffective this funding has been in terms of the policy 'problem' of low adult literacy competence. In exploring this phenomenon, they find themselves in difficulty in determining a sufficiently 'adequate' and transparent discourse with which to think about the issue. Their struggle to 'account' for the field and its complexities and contradictions is a useful reminder of the impossibility of a fidelity of policy impact to policy intention.

Chapter 9: Ian Falk addresses the notion of social capital in relation to unemployment in connection with literacy policy. Through an analysis of interviews with unemployed adults with literacy difficulties, adults at the sharp end of changes to federal employment assistance policies, he argues that policies that fail to take account of the ways that social networks can make things happen in local communities will not produce the desired results. This connection of social networks and values to literacy as a practice of communities and not simply a de-contextualised skill, represents one of the major points of political and theoretical divergence of practitioners/academics from recent policy texts

Chapter 10: Penny McKay discusses a critical question of language policy implementation and finds in its seeming straightforwardness a plethora of ideology-laden issues and questions. Bureaucratic systems need to collect information to enable them to effect policy directions. The assessment regimes that are constituted for these purposes already make choices about what information to value, what complications to admit and which to distance, and what kinds of value to attach to certain language behaviours. In this regard the tensions between assessment regimes that are sensitive to background language characteristics, and English as a second language in particular, as they describe the acquisition of English literacy participate in a politics of the elevation of literacy and its distancing of the background characteristics of learners.

Chapter 11: Peter Kell takes up the politico-administrative orientation of government of recent years as represented in the marketisation of choices. This chapter too scrutinises the representation as commonsensical of deeply ideological framing choices shared by governments of both political persuasions but not always shared by language and literacy practitioners and scholars of this field. He uses adult literacy and VET (vocational education and training)as a case study in order, in his words, to 'provide teachers and practitioners with a critical lens to identify the deficiencies and inadequacies of market-based interpretations of education'.

Chapter 12: Uldis Ozolins describes how *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) made the interpreting and translating (I/T) policy achievements of past language policies in Australia very vulnerable. In its selection of the education and training domains as the only remit of national policy, denying the much wider remit of the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987), it distanced the adult immigrant, adult deaf and adult Indigenous segments of the population whose interests and needs had been served by I/T policy. Ozolins shows how a rich and distinctive tradition of Australian achievement, leading the world in community oriented interpreting policy, in a field dominated by elite European conference interpreting and literary translation, was rendered marginal and isolated by language policy.

Chapter 13: In Des Power's chapter the context of practice expressed by the word 'deafness' is traced over the long policy trajectory that it had occupied. His analysis of the always struggling presence of Deaf and deaf communication issues and needs within public policy accommodations represents a salutary reminder that dominant discourses of policy may make partial, and sometimes token, acknowledgment of group interests that have strong claims on any text or process that claims to be a kind of authorisation for public expenditure in fields of language and literacy.

Chapter 14: The adult community based literacy provision was also rendered marginal by the allocation of priority attention to workplace literacy contexts, yet some of the conditions of practice in that field have entered into the new policy domains. In this chapter, Merilyn Childs shows that displacement, even within fields that are in name privileged in policy by explicit statements and resources allocation, can still contain contrasts between what policy texts announce and what is implemented in their name. Childs explicitly engages with how the politics of the contexts of practice enter into supposedly 'rational' and 'ordered' processes of policy production through an exploration of what she calls the 'landmark narrative' of low student/teacher ratios. Thus she illustrates how the relationship between policy research and policy production is indeed a political one imbued with the politics of discourse.

Chapter 15: In this chapter, Angela Scarino and Leo Papademetre discuss the tensions in the characterisation of languages as 'priority' and less important. An examination of the past 12 years of policies from the point of view of practitioners and teacher trainers, as well as leaders of professional associations, puts forward a challenge to policy-makers about the naming of language categories and the sets of communication communities that choices of languages imply. In what directions is Australia planning its external communications? Who is expected to make linguistic accommodation to whom?

Chapter 16: Christine Nicholls's chapter discusses the dramatic circumstances of Australian Indigenous languages, the shifts and politics involved in policy determinations about how much weight will be accorded to English literacy, versus Indigenous language maintenance, the untenability of such extreme and forced choices and the extreme politics of this within the Northern Territory (NT) in recent moves to remove funding from bilingual education. Nicholls places this analysis in the context of a policy review from the 1973 Whitlam government administration of the NT to the late 1990s and the Territory's independent action.

Taken together these chapters constitute an immense range and depth of Australian policy fields and contexts of practice, over the span of time encompassed from Whitlam to Howard. There are many asymmetries: progress and regress, interests and alliances, moves and counter moves. The attempts to engage in comprehensive and coordinated action for such a disparate range of interests and needs is one of the unique aspects of Australian policy-making, almost never encountered anywhere else in the world. The commensurate difficulty of succeeding with such range, diversity of interest and need and circumstances, along with shifting fortunes over time, is revealed and foregrounded in the contexts of practice analysed here.

Part 5: New openings

Chapter 17: We conclude the book with this contribution from Jack Frawley because it represents a series of new openings through new theorisations, perspectives and possibilities. Frawley's subtle analysis shows how, even in the most elevated of policy domains – literacy – for the most subjugated sections of the population – Indigenous people – there is still the possibility of subversion of policy texts and the creative re-inscription of new and more pluralistic and hybrid meanings into narrow prescriptions. Even a horror text can be influenced in a context of practices, multimodalities and multiliteracies and new questions invisible in old policy about language and literacy can be given life. Policy as discourse can be open and dynamic, even when policy texts are narrow and closed.

Differences of view

There is a wide variety of viewpoints represented in this book. These diverge especially strongly on how we are to interpret the intent and the impact of the 1991 policy report *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, issued by the Minister for Employment, Education and Training J S Dawkins (DEET 1991), but there are considerable divergences of opinion about a host of other matters. No attempt has been made to conceal, minimise or in any way affect these. In fact the divergence of opinion about priorities, strategies, principles and needs is illustrative of the complex discursive politics that characterise the many contexts in which policy gets to play.

Needless to say, while care has been taken to be accurate and faithful to viewpoints and differences, the specific opinions, views, claims and interpretations contained in the chapters of the book are those of the authors; neither the publisher nor the editors are responsible for the views expressed.

Part 1

Openings

1

From policy to anti-policy: How fear of language rights took policy-making out of community hands

Joseph Lo Bianco

Introduction

This chapter serves two functions within the present volume. First it aims to set an overarching framework and identify some terms and themes for the discussion of Australian policy activism in relation to language and literacy. Second it offers my 'take' on these issues. There is, inevitably, some tension between these two. One reason for this tension is simply that the chapter is positioned as the first paper, in a part labelled Openings, in a book in which there is a wide diversity of views. A more substantive reason, however, is that one of the organising ideas of the present volume (that there is a significance to the explicit policy experience of Australia over the last 15 years and that this experience is partly characterised by a special role for intellectuals) is itself an interpretation. This idea has influenced some of the selection of papers, some of the content and some of the organisation that follows.

However, it is important not to exaggerate the contribution of intellectuals, both because 'practitioners' act as intellectuals with what might be called an operational rationality, and also because intellectuals from the academy have often been pushed into political action by having to defend the practical consequences of their theoretical and research work in the public domain. In fact policy work draws on knowledge assembled from both practice and from more scholarly settings and is therefore best seen as a kind of activity, a multi-logue, in which arguments are assembled to bolster alternative courses of action. Community activists have also had to become expert theorists in language policy (Ozolins, this volume) as community knowledge, exemplified by Indigenous language speakers acting as expert 'informants', or immigrant community language speakers being required to mediate in interpreting and translating contexts, or by Deaf people being called upon to 'explain and describe' aspects of Signing in courts of law, in health and medical settings, or in education. This kind of mixing of roles, of the creation of what Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals' (1971), is acute in language policy work in multi-ethnic societies where the state seeks to intervene to manage language. In previous work (see Djite 1994) I have argued that in Australia explicit policy, as distinct from implicit or indirect language policy, arose from three interacting interests. First, the mobilisation of language professionals. This came about as a result of a crisis in foreign language education that ensued from the removal by universities in 1968 of a language requirement for accessing university. Second, the ultimately decisive role of ethnic and Indigenous community groups. From the early 1970s (but especially strongly under the organised leadership of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils in the wake of the Galbally report of 1978) ethnic and Indigenous community groups put together a representative coalition of language interests to advocate explicit Commonwealth policies on language. It was due to this agitation that the Senate investigation between 1982–1984 (SSCEA 1984) was launched. The third set of mobilised interests that shaped policy on language at the national level in Australia were the trade effects of Britain's accession to the then European Economic Community (now European Union) in the mid 1970s. Ultimately, because Australia had to seek alternative markets for its primary produce in Asian societies, there arose the 'Australia is a part of Asia' discourse. This third interest resulted in the principal advocates for language policy being neither language professionals nor domestic language minorities, but rather prominent officials in trade and diplomacy with Canberra connections and persuasive powers.

The first of these interests (language professionals) produced an intellectual legitimation for public policy determinations on language. The second produced a political constituency for language policies. The third introduced commercial, specifically trade, imperatives into the equation by grounding language policy on problems of overarching national priority. Ultimately this took the form of national capability planning, that is, redressing the shortfall between what the nation needed to conduct its external economic dealings and what it had available. The first showed government that policy on languages is an appropriate field of intervention. The second created a community and political/electoral demand, and issue, around language policy. The third foregrounded Australian relations with Asian economies and societies. The first interest deployed a vocabulary of intrinsic value for languages; the second a language of rights and cultural diversity; while the third gave rise to a discourse of economic imperative.

In the absence of any explicit policy on language issues these three interests found much common ground and collaborated in a coalition of interests that transcended their specific differences. However, while professionals contributed legitimation, and Indigenous and ethnic communities supplied a political constituency, and trade/diplomatic personnel an economic rationality, policies still needed champions. The Senate's important report *Report on a national language policy* (SSCEA 1984) was an investigation into the desirability of having a policy addressing language issues at a Commonwealth (Federal) level. The Senate investigation managed to survive a change from the Fraser government (Liberal–National Party, the conservative coalition in Australian politics) elected in 1975 to the Hawke government (Australian Labor Party, the trade union based force in Australian politics) which replaced it in 1983, but on its completion the Senate's report languished for more than two and half years. In the end, the Senate report that had been positively disposed to the idea of a Commonwealth language policy came to nothing partly because it lacked a political insider able to constitute the issue as a policy problem that government should address comprehensively. Since that time each explicit language policy that has been adopted has depended on an individual champion: Senator Susan Ryan, as Federal Education Minister and Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who obtained cabinet approval for Australia's first such policy, the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987); John Dawkins who as Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training (Brock, this volume) obtained cabinet approval for the replacing policy, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991); Queensland Premier Wayne Goss and Prime Minister Paul Keating, who obtained the approval of the Council of Australian Governments for the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS) in 1994; and Employment, Education and Training Minister Dr David Kemp, who obtained cabinet approval for the Commonwealth Literacy Policy.[1]

At a broad level these interests and their political champions serve to explain much of the policy-making from the Whitlam government's (1972–1975) establishment of Northern Territory bilingual education in Indigenous languages (Nicholls, this volume) to the adoption of the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987). When there was no existing policy the three broad interests worked relatively comfortably together. Today there is clear tension among and between the interests, and this tension itself has a policy-making political history as the disruption of alliances and networks was a stratagem of later policy-making (Moore 1996a) but also partly a result of the more overt politicisation of language policy during the 1990s (discussed below). This politicisation was accompanied by an overall discursive regime that has framed the worth of languages, their potential and meanings, only against criteria that preclude speakers of minority languages, especially of Indigenous languages, from converting their language knowledge into any other kind of capital. If intellectual, familial, local, cultural, or humanising discourses were attached to languages, the mother tongue of any child in Australia would be allocated a multiple capital endowment.

Constituency-defined politics can adequately explain a large part of the Commonwealth promulgation of language policy, and why language policy became an acceptable and even necessary feature of governance during the 1980s. During the 1980s and 1990s the management of Australian ethnic and Indigenous diversity, and of Australian relations with Asia, became key problems for Commonwealth governments, both Labor and Liberal-National. This is perhaps best understood by contrast. As far as the first interest is concerned, in both Britain and the United States language professionals have agitated for explicit public policy on language (Lo Bianco

2001) but have been largely unsuccessful. The three countries – Australia, Britain and the United States – also share the second interest since all three have both Indigenous and immigrant derived community languages used among their populations. A crucial difference, however, depletes the comparison: Australia's compulsory voting provisions and its relatively more liberal citizenship laws have the effect of integrating minorities more quickly into the political and social fabric and electoral politics of Australia than occurs in either the US or Britain. The third feature, economically motivated regionalism, is a crucial divide between the UK and US on the one hand, and Australia on the other. Regionalism in the UK means the EU (European Union); in the US it means the Americas. It is only in the late 1990s with the accelerated economic and political integration of the EU that there has developed a language policy effect in the UK (The Nuffield Foundation 1998, 2000). This is greatly attenuated in the US because of its domination of its region, its 'ordeal of hegemony' (Poitras 1990), although the predominance of Spanish over other languages in American education reflects the same overall accommodation to region factors. Asian regionalism for Australia has, however, been very powerfully motivating of language policy, perhaps because of the relative size disparities. The US dominates its region, the UK is a major force in its, while Australia is a small economy needing to successfully penetrate the markets of its part of the world.

The relations among these three interests, and a new interest which emerged in the 1990s (English literacy as human capital), explain a large part of the policy-making from the 1970s to the beginning of the 2000s. I argue that initially the interaction of the three interests produced pluralistic and comprehensive planning for languages, and indeed a kind of 'citizen-driven' policy-making. A major feature of this was the deployment of multiple kinds of language capital, a value for bilingualism which attached it to conversion potential in education, society, intellectual functioning and so on. However, during the 1990s there was a cross-party political pattern distancing, at times exclusion, of the community interests, ethnic and Indigenous interests specifically. This came about from a consensus among all major political forces that elevated economy above nation and community, so that English literacy and trade-related foreign language education were given priority over community-based language interests. The 1990s period was distinctively different from the 1970s and 1980s kinds of language policy-making due to the incorporation of an 'English literacy first' ideology into political considerations. Many events and factors contributed to this alteration of the past accommodations. One was the interpretation made of the 1990 International Literacy Year by John Dawkins as Federal Minister replacing Susan Ryan. Ryan had seen an extension of a key interest of hers with the 'Australianisation' of the curriculums of schools and higher education (CRASTE 1987) that followed in the wake of the Bicentenary celebrations of 1988; whereas Dawkins's greater interest in trade policy predisposed him to the newly emergent OECD-inspired human capital theorisation (OECD 1995) about competitive economic success in a globalising economy and its central attention to literacy. The

Figure 1.1

Language policy interest group	Principal advocacy	Orientation re: multi-lingualism	Policy function served	Capital
Linguists and LOTE teachers	Comprehensive, multilingual policy; intellectual and cultural enrichment ideologies	Universal resource	Intellectual legitimation through the 1970s and 1980s	Multiple values for languages but principally intellectual capital
Indigenous and immigrant origin communities	Multilingualism, intergenerational language maintenance, cultural pluralism; domestic contexts	Community rights	Electoral constituency and moral force through the 1970s and 1980s	Cultural, identity, & familial ideologies and values ie social capital
Regional trade, diplomacy, geo-political strategic interest elites	Priority for Asian languages and national-foreign (regional) contexts	Limited, competitive (foreign resource); community languages as problem	Economic and geo-political priority in the 1980s and 1990s	Economic asset capital among powerful trade-determined regional powers
English-literacy primacy	Standard Australian English literacy; domestic contexts; global English	Community languages as problem	Targeting of English as pre-eminent priority, in the 1990s	Economic asset capital

priority attention devoted to literacy needs and problems eventually came to be reflected in separate policy specification and had the effect of rupturing the 'coalition of interests' approach and its style of work that was to negotiate compromise and consensus. These characteristics of the policy style of the 1980s were also replaced with a more state-centred and directive style. These four interests are represented in schematic form in Figure 1.1. I use the terms 'language as a resource', 'language as a right' and 'language as a problem' (Ruiz 1984) to describe the kind of orientation that policies influenced by different groups reveal towards Australian multilingualism.

Within each interest there is more diversity than is represented in Figure 1.1 and so this figure provides only a general picture. The English-literacy policy phase has shown considerable movement, and ambiguous relations, principally with adult ESL provision (Moore, this volume), with child English as a second language (McKay, this volume) and with Indigenous and immigrant first languages (Lo Bianco 2000). The movement has been from the approach of John Dawkins's *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (Brock, this volume) of allocating priority in policy texts, and very much also in policy programming, to adult literacy as well as in the discursive realm, to the 'illiteracy eradication' approach of David Kemp, from 1996 onwards (Lo Bianco & Freebody 2001) which favoured intervention in primary education. In essence there has been a movement from a policy ambition that attempted to be comprehensive of community languages and community cultures (demographic pluralism shaping policy) to an approach that constructed a hierarchy of choice involving English language literacy (that is, neglecting 'non language' literacies) combined with selected commercially critical Asian foreign languages, to an approach that further removed diversity by addressing only English literacy in primary schooling (constructing a national imagery of a homogeneous norm for the population). These changes have effected reductions to the remit of policy, to its scope and ambition. Each phase of reduction has a complex discursive character in which a new problem has had to be named and given prominence to justify the changes to previous policy. Although the pattern of change has been complex and shifting it nevertheless reveals a clear trajectory from the 1970s and 1980s pattern of making reference to and utilising demographic pluralism as positive warrant for new policy, a kind of organising ideology for languages policies which foregrounds learners' backgrounds, to a 1990s pattern that treats difference as problematical and in which backgrounds are 'backgrounded'. This move, from regarding multilingualism as a resource to construing it as a problem, underlies the national cultural imagery and characterises policy discussions as much as the formal statements of policy. The shift from a language as resource orientation to a language as problem orientation was motivated by concern that making diversity prominent in public policy would enshrine notions of language rights for minorities, or at least establish this principle as a basis on which public resourcing claims would be made. A correlative strategy was that of constituting a narrowly defined national interest, one determined exclusively or predominantly by elites, in the plans for the nation's communication profile. This shift was brought about to the substance of policy by a shift in policy-making style, as is explained below, from a citizen-centred approach that won the admiration of many (Horne 1994) to one far less open, being directed and formalistic in its consultative process (Clyne 1991a; Herriman 1996; Ozolins 1993; Moore 1996a).

Few people in the policy sciences these days imagine that policy is in any respect at all a 'science', and the pretence to science that characterised a considerable part of policy-making theory has been subjected to trenchant criticism (Deleon 1994; Formaini 1990). The policy paradigm that appears best able to represent the multiple and complex character of the field is Majone's (1989) notion of policy as the assembly of arguments. Seeing policy as strategic argument necessarily draws on evidence (data, science, procedure, systematicity) but always with a sense that 'evidence' is always tied to ideology, interests and arguments.

This chapter discusses changes to four dimensions of national language policy at the federal government level from the late 1980s. Specifically discussed are changes in the 'remit' (jurisdictional range) of policy, changes to the 'scope' (what is taken up in policy) of policy, changes in the 'content' (substance) and changes in the 'style' (participatory, top-down, multiple modes of policy-making processes). In the Australian experience these changes go to the heart of the ideological framing of the policy statements. It will be shown that throughout the 1990s and early into the new century there is an underlying pattern of progressive restriction of remit, narrowing of scope, downgrading of content, and undermining of democratic participationism. The prospects of reinvigorating policies with more depth, wider participation, and greater scope conclude the paper.

Meanings

For the purposes of this article the terms 'national', 'language' and 'policy' are given particular meanings.

'National' is taken to include all levels of government, and all institutions of government (beyond just formal education) and also community contexts and institutions that do not depend on government. The collective term I will use for these latter contexts and institutions is 'civil society'. By 'national', therefore, I mean 'government' and 'civil society'. 'Commonwealth' policy means, therefore, policy issued by the Commonwealth government or by one of its departments.

The term 'language' is often given a highly restricted meaning. For the purposes of this article I would like the term language to mean something like 'all Australian languages and literacies and the cultures that are inextricably part of these languages and literacies'.

'Policy' includes the intentions and aims that are attached to the actions proposed in policy texts as well as the discourses that surround the formal enunciations in policy reports. This way of viewing policy, as both discourse and text, is amply justified in current British and American conceptions of policy analysis (Ball 1993). In addition, the implementation and administration of stated or formal policy should not be radically separated from an understanding of what constitutes the policy.

By this logic, therefore, 'policy' means what is announced *as* policy, plus what is written and said *about* policy and what is implemented *in the name of* policy. Usually we have a more limited understanding of policy as being only the plan (or the operational program) that flows from a declaration of intention. The material and structural effects of public policy are to direct public financial resources towards selected kinds of outcomes. In doing this they also symbolise the kind of society that is reflected by the configurations of those choices.

The textual and discursive aspects of policy activity are very complex and involve at least the following elements:

Public advocacy. That is, the lobbying and public pressure that aims to influence policy.

The explicit and formal statement of policy. These statements are what we might commonly call policy reports (texts). Reports that *inform* the development of policy provide interpretational background for the formal policy text and so are included under the present understanding of formal policy declarations; the processes of *review of existing practice* as well as *issues analysis* and *data collection* that goes into producing formal policy are also relevant for comprehensive analysis. All these texts announce a policy intention and the review, analysis and data texts provide information and a context that helps interpretation of the stated policy. In fact formal policy intentions are often very brief declarations containing numerical and time-specified targets, for example: 'Every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level' or '60% of year 12 students will study an Asian language by the year 2004'.

The implied parts of the announced policy. The above two declarations are the two key symbolic aims drawn from two of the policies discussed in more detail below: the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS) and the Commonwealth Literacy Policy (CLP). Such statements of intention imply as well as declare. What is implied in such announcements is usually clear only when we examine what is actually implemented in the name of these declarations. Sometimes we get clues about the implied or covert aspects of policy statements from the silences in the policy texts; what is not said, but could, should or might have been (Ozolins, this volume; Power, this volume). The general discourse environment that surrounds the bringing down of a policy is also relevant, especially how the authority announcing the text positions its opposition and the claims it makes about its own actions. The general context (the political circumstances and events) can tell us a great deal about the policy itself.

An attitude of scepticism towards policy is warranted by the face value problem of policy (Stubbs 1986). Policy texts are inevitably political, and therefore persuasive, and therefore motivated, but they often make claims about the authority issuing the policy and the history of the policy itself that often erases or elides important context. Implied in the literacy policy goal stated above are several silenced, 'naturalised', covert and implied issues that are in fact quite problematical. The fact that these are problematical, but are treated as self-evident and commonsensical in the policy, gives the policy its ideological character. One key issue is that 'literacy' is understood only to include reading and writing performance in standard forms of Australian English. Literacy is assumed to be demonstrated by some formal assessment, say 80% mastery against normalised benchmarks, when it is in fact likely that literacy performance, literacy practices, and literacy valuations vary according to context, user and purposes. From the silences, the context and the implementation, we can infer other understandings of the policy. One is that the policy-issuing authority considers narrowed-down notions of reading and writing performance as a kind of literacy that is prior and more important than other understandings of literacy. Another is that such literacy is more important than other (English) language goals, and more important than wider dimensions and understandings of literacy (eg critical literacy capability, higher order handling of texts, English as a second language). By the precise way in which the policy is crafted these other claims to a 'literacy policy' are relegated to the margins of policy concern. Literacy practices specific to particular curriculum areas and to post-primary levels, the specific or particular problems of component social groups, and literacy as a practice with social and ecological meanings are not to be treated as 'literacy' under the policy. I don't want to claim all of the above as viable counter-interpretations of the stated policy. What I do want to say is that these are the kinds of issues that should legitimately be raised when a simple policy goal can be suspected of making natural what are (potentially at least) problematical issues.

Similarly the 'Asian' languages declaration given above implies a great deal. First, the background knowledge that readers and 'consumers' of policy share with those issuing policy and the critically inclined questions that shared knowledge beyond the policy text induces indicate this. The context in which the policy statement was issued (and therefore the relationship it has with other things going on at the time) is essential background information to interpreting its significance, who its champions were and what they claimed for it. This is important information to counter the tendency of policy texts towards a-historicity. An examination of the alternative ways that the policy could have been expressed, that is, what is silenced and not stated in the policy that perhaps should or could have been dealt with openly, reveals a considerable part of the policy authoring process.

By following these kinds of policy scrutiny, some of the implied policy is revealed. Via such an analysis of NALSAS, which selects four languages for exclusive attention but locates its overall rationale in a regionalism inspired by volume of trade statistics, it becomes clear that, for example, 'an Asian language' doesn't mean Vietnamese or Hindi. The concern isn't strictly with 'Asian' languages but with a particular set of economic features (and not really economic in any broad sense, but trade volume statistics, between national economies). The bulk of the text advocates these 'Asian' languages as though they do not have communities and speakers in Australia, but are only languages of foreign, but important, others. These choices reveal considerable implication about who the speakers of the key languages are taken to be (not Australians), where they are (not Australia) and the kinds of purposes for teaching the languages (for Australians, that is English speakers, to relate to selected foreigners). The interactions that are envisaged are therefore among individuals whose national cultures are Australian/not Australian. Non-'Asian' languages, and languages not understood to be 'Asian' (that is, not *priority* Asian), are textually restricted (by means unspecified) to command a collective total of less than 40% of all school enrolments. This raises multiple and interesting policy questions about the roles of schools, communities and individuals, and the means whereby external engineering of student selection of subjects to study will be realised.

Policy texts are of course political, and not scientific, documents. North American public scholarship has aimed to theorise the relative weight of information content, the 'science' of policy, in relation to its inevitable components of interests and ideology (Weiss 1983). Scholars are sensitive to the first of these, information, since that is what scholarship largely consists of – the construction of knowledge – but in her analysis of the relative weight of interests, ideology and information, Weiss shows how each is always present in varying proportions, and how they interact to produce different policy configurations at different times. The language planning literature often treats language policies as though there is a kit bag of neutral, technical or scientific protocols that can be applied to 'out there' problems, to produce policies largely devoid of ideology. This is encountered in the way in which policy speaks of its own history as though it were self-evident that it should exist, that the problems it addresses are not constructions but 'real-world' legitimations of what the policy seeks to achieve (Moore, this volume). If policy were a science, and if the establishment of problems were independent of political processes, then formal protocols of policy analysis would be suitable to the analysis of other kinds of texts where propositional and declarative content is dominant. In this idealisation, then, language policy work would be mainly allocated to academic language planners. In fact, historically and actually, language policy is undertaken by politicians, monarchs, armies, liberation movements of various kinds, industrialists and economists, chauvinists of various kinds, proselytisers of religion, nation or some other ideology, and various categories of fanatic (Cooper 1989; Calvet 1998) but rarely academic scholars.

How announced policy is implemented. For both the examples, NALSAS and CLP, cited above, examining the implementation means looking at the direct financial allocations that are made; the general resourcing and operational arrangements that are set up to put the policy into practice. The implementation of policy is part of the process of refining and often of defining what the 'formal' policy is. In both of the examples given above, Asian languages and literacy, the policy statements demand extensive interpretational work at the level of administration, a process of continual policy refinement, and not 'mere administration', the separation of which Wilensky (1986) described as a 'necessary fiction' in a Westminster-based system of government.

In thinking about policy work, it is important to see how the policy claims are supported and implemented, or opposed and resisted. Policy is sometimes announced suggestively. In American political discourse this process is called 'dogwhistling', expressing real intentions just beyond the range of explicitness, suggesting belief, action or ideology that may be politically unacceptable, unpopular, divisive, unethical or even illegal, but without ever saying it outright. Governments sometimes want to bring about changes to which they expect strong opposition. They do not always want to engage directly with such opposition.

Finally, there are the professional cultures of the participants. It is a common experience of academics, language professionals and researchers who are brought in to work on government projects that they experience conflict with their administrative/bureaucratic or political counterparts. For sake of simplicity these categories of people are called here professionals/scholars and public officials. Professionals/scholars can end up in conflict with the processes and goals of public officials, and especially with administrators/bureaucrats, for a precise and understandable reason. It is in the interests of public officials to retain a certain degree of ambiguity of objectives, program implementation, and 'collateral purposes'. Public officials, but especially politicians, see advantage in not specifying goals precisely in advance of action, they assess likely reactions to ideas before they proceed with them, and they retain the option of changing tack if circumstances require. Professionals/scholars (teachers, researchers, academics) sometimes get into difficulties because research/scholarship/teaching is based on being systematic, on setting out goals, objectives, and intention clearly (even carefully) in advance of action. This is because the demand of monitoring outcomes requires these classes of professionals to examine the effects of their interventions (in teaching, in research etc). Public officials, on the other hand, see advantage in keeping meanings and intentions ambiguous. This is because there are multiple and overlapping agendas being developed simultaneously, because timelines can be melded or renegotiated, because contexts and circumstances are highly dynamic, and because the basis of monitoring what they do and its outcomes is intensely political. Policy is, after all, a cognate of politics.

It is important not to be overly pessimistic about conflict between the cultures of professionals/scholars and public officials in their dealings with each other. There can be very successful and productive engagement between professionals/scholars and bureaucrats, and between technicians/scientists and politicians/policy-makers. There can be and often are highly productive encounters that yield policies where the information and knowledge content is high, but which are also feasible and practicable, and which contain low quantities of negative ideology. However, these successes are dependent on much negotiation and are by no means typical.

National language policy

With these premises and understandings, then, what could national language policy in Australia today be and what might it address? Since something called 'language' is infused in every dimension of human life, any kind of public action has an impact on language, favouring some usage over others, spelling program 'programme', choosing to say Chairperson or Chair, describing immigrants as Australians, inserting full first names in bibliographies to indicate the proportion of women cited. Every textual practice involves and realises small and larger ideologies and therefore language practice as such is already a kind of planning, choice making, affirmation or distancing. With this kind of understanding something called 'national language policy' would have a broad 'remit', a wide 'scope', could be scrutinised for its democratic and participatory 'style' and, in the demographic reality of contemporary Australia, would inevitably impact on multiple languages, various language contexts, and several purposes and functions. In the present understanding of the field, the aggregate effect of the remit, scope, content and style of policy constitutes its particular ideological character.

There is an almost infinite number of issues and problems that from time to time may be brought into the policy domain. The daily language practices in Australia are extremely diverse and complex. Virtually every public sphere is capable of being allocated policy attention. Seven current issues that are directly or indirectly available for treatment in policy are discussed below. Something called 'national language policy' should have something to say about each of these because if it does not, in an explicit and publicly negotiated way, then it chooses to let these be dealt with via an implied or even covert alternative.

1 **Community-based efforts for the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous Australian languages.** A specific instance might be how Tiwi society organises itself (making use of externally available resources such as compulsory schooling) and how it combines these resources with internal community arrangements to transmit Tiwi to children so that they use the language and subsequently bring up their own children in Tiwi. The relationship that an appropriate national language policy would have with such internal, community-valued language planning would have to be sensitive to the 'ownership' and control of the actual policy by the community. Although this is an issue of ethics, the style of the policy pursued here would be of central importance in the prospects of success in retaining Tiwi as an authentic, culturally appropriate communicative medium (Frawley, this volume; Nicholls, this volume; Fishman 2001).

2 **Mandated adult basic education programs for adults** (Wickert, Taylor, Castleton, Kell, Falk in this volume). Increasing numbers of young adults (many of English-speaking background living in urban areas) enrol in literacy programs not out of personal motivation but because they are compelled to after assessments of their literacy skills by public employment agencies ('job-readiness'). These agencies impose governmental requirements that particular minimum standards of reading and writing must be demonstrated as a condition of the individual's becoming eligible for various kinds of benefits. While this issue might seem to be mainly labour market planning, its incorporation of language-literacy measures for the management and control of publicly dependent individuals, raises questions of content and style of policy-making in addition to scope and remit, and warrants consideration as language policy.

3 **The ways and means of ensuring legal justice and appropriate health care for non-English proficient immigrants.** A specific instance is how professional interpreting and translating services can be provided in courts and hospitals. The justification for such provision responds to the administration of every citizen's right to justice and permanent Australian residents' rights to adequate health care. How can these rights be guaranteed when the overwhelming delivery of these services in Australia is in English and many newly arrived immigrants do not speak English? Commencing with the 1991 *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP), national language policy has moved away from this kind of issue (Clyne 1991a) and a decade later the only kind of policy remit which addresses it is the long-hand of post-settlement services and programs of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, far less the mainstream providers of health and legal justice administration. No longer openly addressed in a systematic or open way the very field itself suffers atrophy (Ozolins, this volume).

4 **The national commitment to provide equal access to educational opportunities.** Hearing impaired and visually impaired children are only two groups for whom this overarching social commitment to equality in schooling, and education more widely, cannot be delivered without systematic language policy and planning (Power, this volume), and children who are required to tackle the prescribed curriculum from an ESL base are another such group (McKay, this volume). Assessment regimes, curriculum planning, and specific professionalised modes of teaching that utilise language systems which acknowledge background factors for cognition and socialisation (whether ESL or appropriate communication modes for Deaf children, including of course Auslan, and oral/audio/Braille systems for the visually impaired) are properly language policy goals. Only a comprehensive notion of national language policy would include communication background issues within national language planning.

5 **Language training for overseas posted government personnel.** Government departments provide language training for staff selected for posting to official positions in Australian missions in countries where the regular and frequent use of a language other than English is designated as essential for the professional work of these Australian representatives. This kind of issue has a particular salience because it is mainly government departments who promulgate language policies, and whose spouse/partner policies influence the kinds of relations 'postees' are likely to encounter.

6 **The broadcasting of news and entertainment programs in various languages.** This falls under many kinds of policy remit: overarching policies of freedom of access to information; a cultural vitality goal; opportunities for cultural maintenance and even projecting the nation into the Asian region as represented by the function of Radio Australia. During the 1990s, policy around

this kind of issue has largely been transferred out of the domain of national language planning.

7 **The facilitation of Australian commercial, geopolitical and strategic interests in the Asian region.** This is a vast remit, but has a strong national language-planning dimension. It involves assessing a range of intellectual and cultural aims of schooling and how these can give prominence to learners accessing ideas, mastering knowledge and appreciating practices which are different from their own or from their societies' dominant practices. These planning implications, and more subtle cultural consequences involved in Australian–Asian relations, are less often treated in policy than the commercial implications (Singh, this volume). Any choices made in relation to Asian connections significantly, and probably inevitably, impact on relations with Europe and other parts of the world. Because present national language policy does not deliberately address the flow on of its selections, these issues become collateral consequences of the Asian languages priority, affected on the rebound. Explicit treatment of some external relationships residualises others and removes them to the domain of implicit, or covert, policy.

What I argue

I have spent some time setting out my understandings of policy, other key terms, and the issues that national language policy ought to address. This is partly as a prelude to the other chapters that follow in this volume. In the rest of this chapter I want to connect some aspects of the present CLP and NALSAS to the adoption in 1992 of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) and the latter to the National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco 1987).

Despite being brought down by different governments and having totally different scope, the CLP and the NALSAS share aspects of a common ideology, genesis and character. In overarching terms this can be called anti-pluralist, by which I mean they are part of a decade-long effort in policy to distance the pluralism and diversity of the Australian population from having a shaping and guiding effect on national language policy.

According to the present analysis, the CLP and NALSAS complete a process of distancing community-based language advocacy that was inaugurated by the ALLP (Moore 1996a). The main ideological task of this has been to replace domestic language and cultural pluralism as a guiding context and rationale of national language policy with a view that national language policy should be shaped by particular categories of elites, especially those connected to domestic industrial restructuring, external trade and foreign diplomacy. In one sense this represents a success for the process of alliances and coalition building that characterised 1970s and 1980s policy work in Australia (Ozolins 1985, 1993) since the very possibility of

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making explicit, and comprehensive, national language planning is unusual in English-speaking nations.

The overall term that suggests itself for 1990s policy-making is elite determination. I understand this as a reaction against the pluralist/multicultural, domestic community-based nature of 1970s and 1980s policy-making. The 1980s coalition building around pluralism was described earlier. After the failure of the Senate report of 1984 (SSCEA 1984), public agitation recommenced and culminated in the endorsement on June 4 1987 by the federal cabinet of the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL). It wasn't this policy text that made Australian domestic pluralism a central feature of national language planning, but rather the strategic alliance of the professional, community, and Asia-oriented interests that combined to pressure the Fraser administration to inaugurate the Senate investigation into explicit national language planning for Australia. In retrospect the understanding of pluralism that the language policy coalition, convened by the ethnic communities councils, operated with was sometimes quite limited, that of 'ethnic-based multiculturalism', but by the late 1970s until the late 1980s it had became a powerful political constituency. Until the 1978 Galbally report, introduced and endorsed by the Fraser Liberal-National Coalition administration, multiculturalism was dominantly a Labor Party project. Labor had conceived of it principally as an embellishment of class differences in society. The legitimation by the Fraser government of multiculturalism by seeing difference as nation-unifying, within overarching social solidarity of common citizenship, and English as the common national language, inaugurated a rather unique Australian experience, that of making cultural diversity a shared political program of all sides of politics. This compact held shaky sway until the late 1990s and the ambivalence towards multicultural policy displayed by the Howard Liberal-National Coalition government. The Galbally report focused on providing financing for migrant settlement programs, and especially for English as a second language, but it also opened the door to other languages, establishing the Special Broadcasting Service and supporting ethnic schools with direct financing. Its style was consultative in preparation and implementation.

The NPL was the language articulation of this wider culturally pluralist compromise in Australian political culture. When Senator Susan Ryan took the policy to Cabinet on June 4 1987, it had behind it, therefore, a considerable history of participatory politics (Horne 1994), anticipation and agitation for its adoption, as well as the background bipartisan meta-policy of multiculturalism. The meta-policy frame for the ALLP was an ideology of Labor's adoption of free market thinking, and indeed of a competitively tendered market for competence, training and other goods and services. For Ryan the NPL was also connected with her personal attachment to Australianise university and school curriculums (CRASTE 1987); for Dawkins the ALLP resonated with his connection between education and economy.

NPL and ALLP

The *National Policy on Languages* (NPL) and *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) are the two main national language policy texts in Australia. Although they differ in both substance and style, the ALLP explicitly claimed to be 'derived from' and 'closely influenced by' the NPL (DEET 1991, companion volume: 7) and they share the common feature of attempting to encompass wide interests. What were the policy tools for change?

The ALLP represented itself and claimed to be a continuation of the NPL. This claim was intended to forestall the energetic public criticism that was waged against its introduction (Clyne 1991a). However, in the reality of its essential ethos and objectives, the ALLP contradicted and sought to undermine the pluralist basis of the NPL and to disenfranchise the coalition of community-based interests that had brought it about. The ALLP is an exemplary instance of what Stubbs (1986) has called 'face value' policy work. In this vein Moore's (1996a: 480) detailed comparison of the differences between these policy texts states that:

> The ALLP foregrounds English and 'Asian' languages; ties English literacy to education, training and employment; views not 'speaking' English as a threat to democracy; ties Asian languages to trade...generalises and obscures the role of different languages by mythologising the instrumental value of some, obliterating others, and demonising the consequences of lack of English.

These characteristics are contrasted with the kind of national language planning it replaced, which 'articulates the multiple values for languages; focuses on the potential of languages as resources in a variety of ways' (Moore 1996a: 480).

Pauwels (2000) indicates a further mode in which 1980s policy is much wider in scope and social ambition, the NPL being one of the very few national policies she can identify which aims to contest prejudice by declaring an anti-sexist and anti-racist commitment. The absence of commitment to bias-free language is symptomatic of the restricted scope of policy that commences with the ALLP, policies which focus mainly on official changes to the operational arrangements of education and training system programs rather than societal reform of any deeper kind.

These differences are also evident in the policy *style*. Many scholars and commentators have described the participatory process of the development of community-based policy-making of the 1980s as in itself a distinctive achievement (Herriman 1996), and especially Donald Horne who saw it as an exemplar of democratic policy work: 'A blueprint for change...stamped by the voice of ordinary citizens' (1994: 20).

The process and practice of making explicit policy via coalitions of cross-sectoral interests negotiating agreement via compromise, and the structural form that these policies took in the Australian Research Council's founding of the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia which grew from the 1980s policy moment (one of the few surviving elements of Australian innovation in languages policy), have been included in the *The Macquarie encyclopedia of Australian events: Events that shaped the history of Australia* (Part XII: 634). Similar recognition came from the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee's report to the Council of Australian Governments in August 1994 (CFAC 1994, under 'Achievements of Federation': 29) stating: 'In 1987 the federal government adopted a National Policy on Languages, becoming the first English speaking country to have such a policy and the first in the world to have a multilingual languages policy'. When its replacement was threatened it is unsurprising that it was strenuously defended by the many who had worked for more than a decade for its adoption. They were acting under guidance of a Hawke Prime Ministerial commitment (March 1990) to 'maintain and develop the NPL' believing it was what it promised and not what it turned out to be.

The supporters of pluralism-based language policy also drew on the ongoing work of the House of Representatives which, in its *Report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance* (HRSCATSIA 1992), expressed strongly sustaining views. This is one of very few documents in Australian public policy life devoted to the extreme language policy circumstance of the extinction of Indigenous languages, and it was clear that the achieved policy position of Australian multilingualism should not be cast aside by what it saw, rightly, as an emerging narrow economism. It strongly criticised the federal administration of education and training, and the ALLP (pp 81–3), concluding that the 'ALLP is nowhere near as comprehensive as the NPL' and lamenting that this narrowing would restrict the prospects of effective support for Indigenous language maintenance (see also Ingram 1994 and Herriman 1996). The main basis of concern for the House of Representatives relates to the narrow focus of the ALLP (its exclusive focus on formal education and training systems) rather than community and social life more broadly in partnership with government. As far as threatened Indigenous languages are concerned the overwhelming conclusion of international research of intergenerational language transmission is that formal education systems are unreliable allies of sustaining endangered languages (Fishman 2001; Lo Bianco & Rhydwen 2001), while Herriman and Ingram identify the narrowed remit and focus as indicating that the 1980s idea of collaborative action for shared national language purposes and deeper national reconstruction was being cast aside for intra-governmental, portfolio-based, turf wars (Moore, this volume) and a narrowed remit.

Another kind of narrowing inaugurated with 1990s policy becomes evident with an analysis of the funding delivered, claimed and implied. The funding supplied by the cabinet decision of June 1987, and expanded over the subsequent years, was overwhelmingly 'new money'. On page 25 of the ALLP (volume 1), the total funding of $233.35 million in 1990–91 described as being for the policy package includes $94.40 million of adult ESL (pre-existing funding under the then Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, a program with a 40-year history) and $92.95 million for child ESL whose authority head in policy can be traced to the Child Migrant Education Program of 1970 (Singh, this volume; McKay, this volume).

In 1990, the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME), as the representative body implementing the NPL, completed a process involving publicly commissioned and publicly disseminated reviews of its programs with a representative seminar involving all states and territories, the Commonwealth and professional associations and community groups convened to discuss the findings and project a continuation of national language policy. No policy before or since has conducted an equivalent degree of open evaluation. The resultant report was prepared in the light of a public and repeated Prime Ministerial commitment to continue with a pluralism-oriented national language policy, unambiguously stated by Hawke as 'maintain and develop the NPL'. In a forthright appraisal of achievements and of areas of lack of success, AACLAME proposed expansions of funding for all the areas of funded policy, including adult literacy. However, an emergent and soon to be dominant ideology of labour market human capital theorisation, combined with an impatient and more directive style of policy-making swept this aside, renamed existing programs and provided a new language for warranting any kind of policy intervention.

AACLAME's inauguration of funding from the Commonwealth for the first time in Indigenous languages outside of state-controlled schooling, for Sign Language (Auslan) as a community language, for multilingual language services and for ESL and adult literacy in English, was also fundamental in shaping subsequent research on which, at least putatively, policy interventions were based. My recollection of this is of an almost irresistible and dramatic reshaping of education ideologies from Ryan to Dawkins, the opposition of the latter to multiculturally inspired policy (Seemann 1987), and the drawing together of forces insistent of bringing about change. The head of a federal department described the pressure against the NPL to me thus: '...it's time for hard-nosed policy now, for the economy'.

AACLAME had cooperated actively with constituent representative bodies such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy and requested direction from them in commissioning policy-influencing research (Wickert, this volume). The first national examination of adult literacy (Wickert 1989), a vital study of the attitudes and opinions of unions and employers on literacy in the workplace (Long 1989) and an examination of literacy and numeracy labour market programs (Cumming & Morris 1991) were all NPL initiatives, and all were critical determinants of subsequent policy. But not evidence (or absence of it), nor openness (or too much of that), nor existing arrangements, nor public consensus were sufficient warrants for continuing with existing policy frames. Hard-nosed times demanded new discourse, new powers and a new policy. Not because (English) literacy was not being given attention, but because other languages, cultures, and interests were. The interests that characterised 1990s national language planning included regional trade interests, union and employer representatives supportive of economic restructuring aimed at making marketplace criteria central ones in the allocation of public resources (Kell, this volume; Falk, this volume), and favoured former trade commissioners and diplomats.

The *style* of national language policy-making that was introduced to achieve displacements of community and broad professional influence on national language policy was a directive, centrist system embellished with processes of guided consultation (Clyne 1991a); it proved to be an effective combination of discursive and practical arrangements for 'taking the risk out of democracy' (Carey 1997).

NALSAS and CLP

Just as the ALLP created its own history, as all policies do, so too did those that succeeded it. Since the ALLP had been so transparently party policy - the NPL had, by contrast, succeeded in retaining a part of the bipartisanship produced during the Senate language enquiry (SSCEA 1984) - its termination on a change of government was inevitable.

Since the ALLP there have been two further statements that can be considered national language policies. The first is the 1994 the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS); the second is contained within the series of statements and reports issued in September 1997 on (English) literacy; called here collectively, the Commonwealth Literacy Policy (CLP).

NALSAS is a plan deriving from the report *Asian languages and Australia's economic future* (Rudd 1994) of a committee chaired by K Rudd, then head of the Queensland Premier's Department. The Strategy was endorsed in February 1994 at a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. The concrete part of the policy consists of an intergovernmental agreement to a ten-year shared expenditure plan (50% federal government, matched by the state and territory governments in proportion to their percentages of the national school enrolment totals). This spending is on behalf of the teaching of four languages: Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean.[2] The four languages were selected on the basis of trade volume statistics, that is, the total financial value of the exchange of goods and services between Australia and the main foreign markets where these languages are spoken. The figures are supplied by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Strategy expressly states that its only basis for modification is any change in these figures as noted by the same Department. This is remarkable in that the stimulus for modifying what essentially is a program for the teaching of languages in schools rests with a federal department of government that has no relationship at all with schools.

The NALSAS approach to national language policy involves a particular style of guided assertion: setting prescriptive targets, making tough choices, and determining a transcending priority of 'national priorities'. There is a rather unproblematised notion of *the national interest* which is based either on a sense that there is inevitable conflict with other interests (community or local interests) or at least that such other interests deflect attention from the preeminently important *national interest*. What the national interest is at any one time is to be determined by certain kinds of experience and position, that is, by certain public elites who are engaged professionally in national representation in trade and geopolitical strategy. The details of the national interest are not negotiated with non-elites, not with community organisations, language professionals and especially not with 'cultural minorities'. The kinds of expertise that language professionals, for example, might bring to language education is relegated to a category of 'technical and specialist input' in relation to the operationalisation of established policy, that is, to methodology for implementation rather than involvement in any substantive policy setting.

The educational goals of NALSAS are extremely valuable, the redress of past bias against Asian languages within public schooling and higher education and the identification of a regional rationale for some part of the language choices that Australian public authorities need to make. An alternative mode of producing a strategy for making prominent regional languages in public education would have yielded an ultimately more robust policy, if only because its eventual implementers would have had more commitment to its goals. A negotiated, less impositional approach is both possible and desirable. The emerging evidence is that few of the numerical goals of the NALSAS will, in fact, be achieved. This may well have turned out differently with more public support for its goals, via a more negotiative policy in which the characterisation of the language and cultural proficiencies of Australians of Asian origin would have played a positive and prominent role.

The Strategy, and the report on which it is based, also suggests an optimism about 'top-downism' that is barely warranted. Education in Australia is a pre-eminently dispersed responsibility among education jurisdictions, state and territory bureaucracies, parents and citizens groups, individual schools and language education professionals. A considerable part of new implementation in educational practice requires recognition that practitioner commitment to externally derived change is crucial to successful enactment of change. This may well prove to have been a critical oversight of the NALSAS project. The NALSAS text is governed by a logic of trade volume statistics, combined with geopolitics. However, when contrasted with the relative performance of Australian trade with particular markets, Asian and non-Asian, rather than concentration on trade volume (how much, not how well), different sets of language choices would emerge, and these would change over time. In any case all this ignores important factors that influence student perception of language utility.

A style that negotiated directly and seriously with language professionals and community interests would have yielded an ultimately more productive and powerful national language initiative for 'Asian' languages in general, even for the key languages favoured by the Strategy. Decades of research in sociolinguistics have provided strong evidence about how formal education in languages needs to work hand in hand with 'outside-of school' communicative realities for best outcomes (Baetens Beardsmore 1992, 1993). Languages are best learned (and retained) when teaching builds on domains of communicative use (networks of community institutions, settings and culture, that is, language 'ecologies') that sustain languages. Advocating the teaching and learning of languages in real and communicative contexts (not stressing the 'foreign') is not simply to push for 'community' preferences, but rather to enshrine a means of succeeding, rather than replicating past failure.

NALSAS excludes important potential beneficiaries from the increased funding it supplies.

Excluded from direct support are:

- Asian languages other than the four it declares to be of priority concern;
- Australian community contexts for all Asian languages (including any Australian context for the key four);
- All 'non-Asian' languages.

Specifically excluded therefore are:

- Vietnamese, Hindi, Thai, Arabic, Tamil, Filipino etc;
- Australian community and institutional contexts or settings (that is, all Australian language and culture ecologies) for Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean;
- All other languages (and their Australian ecologies), for example, Spanish, Turkish, French, German and Swahili which have no place at all in the only national language policy vision that the federal and state governments have promulgated in the last decade.

The second explicit statement on national language policy in Australia since the ALLP consists of a collection of reports and initiatives dating from September 1997. These are several literacy pronouncements from the federal government and a series of initiatives as agreed by Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Education in 1996 and 1997. The Ministers agreed on the following five-point plan: comprehensive assessment, early intervention, national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, assessment against benchmarks, and national reporting on student achievement (Lo Bianco & Freebody 2001: vii). These moves derive principally from Commonwealth government response to *Mapping literacy achievement* (Masters & Forster 1997) as set out in *Literacy standards in Australia* (Kemp 1997) and are collectively labelled here the Commonwealth Literacy Policy (CLP). Importantly the ALLP stress of adult literacy was set aside, despite empirical evidence that should have warranted ongoing federal commitment to a strong adult literacy policy (ABS 1997a), indicating the considerable gap between 'evidence' and 'action' that invalidates those approaches to policy which imagine that it is any kind of directly rational practice in which intervention results from the demonstration of need. Essentially the CLP is a public policy response to statistically represented information about the performance of Year 3 and Year 5 students against expected performance descriptions, and the conclusion that far too high a percentage is underperforming (Lo Bianco 1998a, 1998b; McKay, this volume), but related evidence of persisting and high adult literacy performance difficulties do not attract policy action. Whereas Dawkins favoured tackling literacy problems at the labour market interface, Kemp has tended to favour intervention in primary schooling.

Both elide distinctions between ESL, literacy and English, a process inaugurated in the ALLP, though some acknowledgement of the pedagogical and social differences was retained in that report. As an instance of national language policy, the CLP is important as much for what it silences as for what it explicitly states. 'Literacy' is always assumed to be in English only, and standard English only, but this is hardly ever explicated. Adult literacy problems are pathologised, located in individuals, or imagined to be immigrant-based, or to be eradicated by timely action in infants schools. These are especially problematical assumptions for Indigenous Australians, for adult immigrants and socioeconomically disadvantaged English-speaking Australian born (ABS 1997a). No *language* literacies, other than English ones, are entertained. No *literacies* other than *language* literacies are given any attention either. In other words, this is a literacy policy remit focusing on English spelling and sentences – no Chinese and no technological, document or quantitative literacies are included. Indeed no contexts other than schooling (and early schooling, and early schooling in relation to formal writing and reading protocols such as spelling, paragraph cohesion) are considered seriously at all (McKay 1998a, 1998b). The CLP operates from assumptions of an English native speaking Australian community, almost a nostalgic recreation. The various Englishes that diverge from the codes of English, the registers and styles of school curriculum English into which literacy education socialises learners, are not mentioned. The kinds of assessment regimes that flow from these characterisations of who the learners are, what they know and how they become proficient in English are major problematical consequences of idealised constructions of both literacy as an entity and of the assumed Australian community (McKay 1999).

In these respects the CLP shares a good deal of the subtle ideology of the 1990 UK national curriculum. The UK national curriculum was bolstered by a strong sense of government needing to intervene to counter theories and views of language that had taken hold in public education and that could broadly be called 'variationist' (Lo Bianco 2001). Variationist views of language give prominence to the context, purpose and setting of language behaviours and see language as variable and reflective of sociocultural and economic contingencies. Accepting language as a varying and contingent entity, and not as some fixed and invariate set of rigidities, carries many pedagogical implications. However, it does not necessarily mean aiming low in schooling standards, or being opposed to standard language or to measurement.

Accepting children's existing language practices as a starting fact (what languages, literacies and attitudes to language and literacy children bring to school) is just as compatible with aiming high as stressing standards and standardisation (McKay 1998b). It is also more sophisticated. Devising pedagogy to induct, inculcate, teach and model for learners control over powerful forms of writing, and speaking, follows more productively from accepting and recognising difference (and understanding language as sets of practices that are engaged in for personal and social ends) than from pretending that these differences don't exist, or that they exist but don't matter. Accepting that the world is hierarchically organised, and unfair, is integrally part of such a view of communication practices which sees communication as cultural acts irretrievably bound up with social contexts, that is, language as organically and ecologically a set of acts in and on the world where possibly irreconcilable interests jostle. These are the sorts of consequences of accepting varationist principles for language rather than seeing language as sets of describable and abstract rules. Variationism in language and literacy tends to be operationised in schooling as needing methodologies for extending learners' repertoires of language, so that they can draw on language and literacy resources for participating equitably in powerful contexts, going for jobs, defending oneself against criticism, expressing opinions, or participating in politics.

The neglect of 'background' is a remarkable fact when the statistical evidence for literacy performance indicates that the under-performing learners are overwhelmingly drawn from non-standard English Indigenous backgrounds, non-English speaking immigrant backgrounds, and various categories of socioeconomically disadvantaged learners.

The CLP speaks of its subject matter as though there is a natural, 'unproblematic' single language context in which a largely technical intervention called 'literacy teaching' operates. This process of assuming, and naturalising, leads inevitably to giving attention only to a restricted set of issues that the language policy will address. These are the technical issues of when it is best to intervene pedagogically, what methods and techniques yield what kind of results, and how national regimes of testing can be mounted to monitor the outcomes.

Remit, scope, content and style: Different policy ideologies

National language planning during the 1990s has systematically operated a common project. This project has been shared among national language policies as diverse as those concerned with teaching 'Asian' languages as foreign languages and schemes for national testing of English literacy capabilities among primary school children. The common project has been to replace pluralist and variationist thinking as a basis for policy across all dimensions of policy, the remit, scope, content and style. The comprehensive scope and ambition of 1980s policy has been successfully supplanted by a *language restrictionist* ideological basis in the 1990s.

A series of policy moves, mainly operating via the application of *divisive prioritisation* and the marshalling of the logic of *exclusive national interest* unifies these otherwise highly disparate national language policy texts in this common project.

The exclusions, reductions, removals and silences that these different but commonly oriented texts operationalise are schematised in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2

	Remit	Scope	Content	Style
NPL	Optimistic about a partnership between government and civil society	Multiple values for languages and English; community-valuations balanced with public valuations; community ecologies recognised	Teaching and learning languages; English as common language, English as a Second Language, and literacy, as rights; multilingual services; community ecologies of languages; broadcasting, libraries, research and policy	Negotiated between professionals and community interests, national interest established participatorily; collaborative style/ coalitions of interest
ALLP	Principally a governmental responsibility, federal-state relations paramount, relations between national economies foregrounded; cascade method of funding from top-down; civil society distanced; formal education settings privileged	Some multilingual orientation; priority for commercially relevant Asian foreign languages; distances community ecologies for languages, English literacy prioritised for labour market access facilitat in, non-job connected literacies distanced, equates ESL, literacy and 'English'	Teaching languages; community ecologies distanced; non-educational settings marginalised; favours government to government mechanisms for action; supplies new resourcing in several areas, renames existing programs to invoke new priority, skills based and oriented, communcation contexts emphasise assessability and external judgment	Policy rests with government and business, guided but not directive style; guided consultations, political leadership and direction setting justified on external nation to nation evidence of communication needs
NALSAS	Jurisdictional focus on Commonwealth funded education and training fields; state-federal priority relations, nation-language associations foregrounded, labour market and trade fields favoured	Four Asian languages absolute priority; conceived as languages of foreign national economics and narrow values for languages; foregrounds Australian culture and identity as unilingual	Teaching languages; community ecologies settings marginalised	Centralised and directed policy making; diplomats and trade officials powerful allies of government; community advocates and professionals converted as providers of technical input
CLP	Early formal schooling; state and federal bureaucracies and government determined	English language literacy superordinate; backgrounds language differences; imagines a native English-speaking community	Early formal schooling exclusive focus; testing foregrounded; community literacies marginalised, rigid performance normalisations, external testing regimes for resource determinations	Directive policy making; certain classes of professional distanced, practitioner insight and knowledge devalued

The ideological framing (or the key organising ideas) of these national language policies gravitate around several binary selections. Exercising particular patterns of selections for the NALSAS and CLP yields patterns of thinking about diversity, difference, variations and standards which shape the actual policy content:

- multilingualism – resource *or* problem;
- multiculturalism – a basis for globalisation policies *or* a handicap;
- motivational purpose – human rights *or* human capital;
- national interest – elite determined *or* collaboratively negotiated;
- community language ecologies – regarded positively *or* negatively;
- literacy – plural and diverse (an ecology) *or* normalised (a metric);
- international orientation – Asian *or* global;
- language variation – foregrounded *or* backgrounded.

The era of One Nation and the ambivalence about pluralism expressed by the Howard federal government are not only coincidental with the language restrictionist policies of the 1990s but constitute the larger social and ideological frames within which national language policy has taken its place.

The sequence of restriction

The first restriction. This restriction was to the jurisdictional remit of policy, largely through removal of community settings from its scope. Little serious interest was paid to language services (interpreting and translating, public libraries and non-English language materials, independent research in language etc), favouring jurisdictional and administrative domains under the control or influence of the federal education and training bureaucracy. A Human Capital principle came to replace Human Rights orientations. The emergent interest of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 1995) in the relative literacy performance of industrialised economies gave fresh impetus to trade performance with accessing foreign non-English language markets, and measures of literacy with domestic economic restructuring. Inherently this removal of community-based interests from the remit of policy also changed the style of policy-making.

Underscoring this change was the abolition of the representative Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education and its replacement with the Australian Language and Literacy Council that was broadly representative, but the Minister was impervious to several requests that ethnic minority interests warranted representation. The in-house nature of the reviews of ALLP programs, despite their falling off proverbial trucks, further distanced the style of policy-making from its more open predecessors. Advisory structures for NALSAS went further and located advice within the state–federal administration. This process reached maximum expression in the complete 'portfolio-isation' (Ozolins, personal communication) of literacy policy work in the late 1990s. These style differences are neither random, nor without considerable meaning.

Associating language policy principally with the priorities of the federal training plans for the labour market made subsequent restrictions possible and likely. Inevitably, perhaps, the record of the government in labour market reform became a key dispute issue between the two main sides of party politics. This had the effect of entrenching the language–literacy policy connection with employability measures but, significantly, of making adult literacy policy itself vulnerable to later replacement with a change in the ruling political ideology.

The second restriction. This came in the form of a displacement of an entire sector of previously legitimate claims. NALSAS relegated the claims of diverse language groups to the margins of language policy and weakened cultural, intellectual and multicultural views of why languages are important, in preference to some associations of some languages with some trade volume statistics. The instrumentalism that these moves elevated completed a cycle of appropriation of languages other than English to the visible priorities of the government and its new preferred advisers who were from diplomatic and trade backgrounds in the main. In itself this might not have proved so negative if in the discursive realm public policy had retained a commitment to intellectual, cultural and even rights discourse for minority populations. That this did not happen made it more than likely that the basis on which success would be measured in languages education would be the almost totally unachievable demonstration of specifiable international trade benefits.

The third restriction. The Commonwealth Literacy Policy extended these processes of relegation and marginalisation to English literacy education. The CLP displaced adult literacy and basic education claims as it transferred attention to literacy to early schooling. It also impacted on the then prevailing sense that variation in Australian literacy and language contexts were usefully part of pedagogical intervention for English literacy. In the past this had meant that discussions of who had literacy difficulties in Australia would venture into discussion of real contexts of persisting literacy problems and the social categories these predicted: urban and rural poverty, Indigenous contexts, recent immigration, lower completed schooling, age group segments and a range of other specifiable social categories. The CLP foregrounded kinds of literacy education (phonics versus whole language versus genre), individualism, families reading to children and teacher training. The CLP therefore removed from policy the early 1990s bid for articulated and continuous life-long learning principles. This held that continuous literacy learning opportunities were needed given social and technological demands on what constitutes literacy. The CLP also brought about a distancing of professional claims to involvement in the substance of policy determination, and especially practitioner professionalism. As it turned out, from being an ally of adult literacy, the ALLP proved to be a false friend. By appropriating adult literacy so strongly to job market intervention politics it elevated its political ideology to such an extent that a different politics about employment and the operation of free labour markets would have little place for workplace literacy interventions.

The CLP also weakened language claims other than an English-only notion of literacy. In this regard the discursive effect of the CLP has been to make problematical what more than two decades of public advocacy around language pluralism had sought to naturalise, that is, that language (and by extension literacy and wider communication contexts) count in education performance, teaching and learning. Two decades of making background count was reversed by policy discourse and texts that paraded an imagined uniformity of communication practices among Australians. In bringing about this relegation English literacy was variously described as 'the fundamental issue', 'the essential skill', 'the critical objective of schooling', 'the single most important achievement of education'. In making English literacy the superordinate category all other language policy claims have been made vulnerable to the criticism of preferring luxury over fundament.

This sequence of restrictions has yielded an effective national language policy as co-terminous with English literacy, narrowly conceived and executed, with a side-lined interest in teaching four languages (languages that thousands of Australians grow up using in their homes) as though they were foreign.

What have been the consequences?

What actually happens in language and literacy classrooms, and more profoundly, in the wider community's language and literacy practices, is relatively autonomous of public policy. While there is no firewall between the policy and the local settings where many of the language activities government wants to influence occur, there is space for autonomous action. There is also space for resistance and contestation of policy.

This is powerfully true of Commonwealth government language policy-making given that it needs to implement its policy determinations via institutional settings and arrangements over which it has only influence and not ultimate control. The federal education minister does not run a single education institution.

As powerful as this jurisdictional barrier is the expertise-control barrier is even more important. The asymmetrical power between the policy determination authority and the practitioner is greatly diminished the closer we get to the classroom door. The professional/scholar category (here mainly the teacher) has a power to withhold active consent, active cooperation. This power deploys tools that range from active resistance and opposition to less than whole-heartedness in implementation. Even the latter is a serious risk for the many-times removed federal ministers who occupy education and training portfolios. Federal ministers require active cooperation from those who occupy the critical points of delivery of policy intention.

Evidence of the difficulties that bureaucracies encounter in their struggle to control the space of practice is the rich proliferation of assessment, testing, monitoring and evaluation modes. Getting a handle on what is going on is not easy when the realms are discursively incommensurate. Being Boss is even harder when the knowledge that interfaces between the two is asymmetrically organised. If the practitioner is conversant with the domain of policy and administration, but the public official's discursive repertoire does not command the space of practice, relative power relations can undergo transformation.

That practitioner cooperation is often less than whole-hearted is demonstrated by what happens in the space between the policy text and its implementation. Increasingly this space is occupied by a class of professionals engaged in the service of public officials, designing data collection and monitoring schemes to interpret the world of practice for consumption by the world of policy. Unlike past decades when to manage an education bureaucracy required background in teaching or in running schools, corporate management and bureaucratic promotion rewards generalists, program administration with content-free, or content-reduced, mastery of the managed field. This practice widens the gap between knowledge/expertise of the public official and the practitioner. Bureaucratic ruling to implement policy requires setting in place ways of knowing, literacies, schemes for outsider reading of what teachers do and what the effect of what they have done is. This knowledge deficit makes conversations between policy personnel and practitioners resemble an intercultural discourse where assumptions, background knowledge, values, experience and purposes vary considerably. This is therefore rich territory for breeding new classes of professional interpreters who either mediate the professional conversation, or convert its forms into regimes for the consumption of administration (statistical representation, averages, monetisation, correlations, an alternative jargon which is a kind of bureaucratic overwriting of lived experience). Practitioner half-heartedness can be sufficient to undermine policy texts. It follows that collaboration is more than ethically warranted. It often makes the difference between success and failure.

The success of 1990s policy in rolling back 1980s ideologies of language pluralism does not equate with 'out there' language and literacy practices. In the 'real worlds' of practice and community, counterposed to the real worlds of policy inhabited by policy-making elites, Australian language and literacy remains plural, diverse and rich. The policies that 'stand for' this reality represent it as a kind of homogeneity, almost nostalgia. Practices are a form of unexplicated policy, potential policy, the way things are. Hospitals in Australian cities and towns retain access to professional multilingual interpreting and translating services. Law courts count on similar services. Voluntary community-based efforts to retain and transmit languages intergenerationally are vibrant and well informed. Public interest in diversity, languages and a plural notion of the Australian polity is buoyant, especially among young Australians who according to newspaper surveys imagine a multicultural and plurilingual Australian identity.[3] Television and radio broadcasting and transmission continue to diversify to accommodate new languages as new arrivals enrich the stock of Australian languages. Australian schools and higher education institutions still teach more languages and Australian examination systems still accredit more languages than almost any other country in the world. Australian academics and researchers are still invited in greatly disproportionate numbers to advise international agencies and foreign governments about the social and policy consequences of multilingualism.

In much of Australian life diversity is operationalised as natural. Its opposition still has a job to do to undo its surveyed public affirmation and there is no one-to-one correlation between policy developments that aim to restrict the scope, remit and substance of policy texts and the demographic and social realities. The clear victory of 1990s policy styles which inaugurated a guided methodology, led by elites who fashion interest after preference, has impoverished and denuded the participatory character of national language policy-making of previous eras. However, resistances, withholdings of cooperation and continuing diversity are only one of the stories of language policy-making. There are also concrete and disturbingly negative consequences that have resulted.

Most dramatic has been the Northern Territory government's removal of funding from Aboriginal bilingual programs. Recruiting the formulae of the 'literacy crisis' panic behind the Commonwealth Literacy Policy, programs that were designed to yield bi-*lingual* and bi-*cultural* competence were dismantled (Nicholls, this volume). There have been many other examples. Post-immigration social and financial entitlements and immigration entry now run the gauntlet of various kinds of tests and measures of language and literacy performance, when in the past social criteria of demonstrable economic need sufficed. Access to training programs and entitlements to financial benefits for the categories of unemployed people, regardless of birthplace, are now conditioned by compulsory participation in literacy teaching. There is continuing pressure to reduce the range and number of languages other than English offered in Australian schools; several universities have cut back strongly on the number of languages that they offer and more cuts are threatened. Other universities teach non-English literature programs only in English because learners are not permitted sufficient time to read originals. ESL teaching in schools across the country is being sent back to broom closets under pressure from systems and individual schools seeking to be seen responding to the crisis of inadequate performance that has been constructed around 'literacy' (Lo Bianco 2000; McKay, this volume).

Many professional networks of language advocates have been disrupted and where there was evidence of cooperative endeavour there has been substituted a competitive and non-collegial ethos (Moore 1996a). Throughout the 1980s there were regular and highly productive meetings of the lobby groups aiming to bring about a national language policy. Galvanised by a common aim that transcended sectional loyalties, professional associations negotiated with community representatives. Professional and personal tensions and conflicts formed part of the negotiating space but there was sufficient common purpose to permit a decade-long partnership to operate. The three interests identified at the beginning of this chapter were sufficiently stable to facilitate working agreements. Casualised employment now makes even accidental cooperation harder. Now professional tensions display themselves to public officials, sometimes presenting them with opportunities for a politics of cooption, division and fragmentation.

The 1980s alliance gathered together Indigenous language educators and community personnel, immigrant language groups, teachers of English (both primary literacy educators and secondary subject English teachers), Deaf groups, interpreters and translators, business lobby groups and so on. This alliance was a strategically effective working collaboration around reasonably principled compromises that permitted collective action. 1990s policies, and the divisive prioritisation they have established, have exaggerated partisan allegiances, enshrined cooptions and generally produced a waning of enthusiasm for participating in government sponsored research and policy projects.

Language rights?

The processes of narrowing that have characterised language policy have followed a sequential pattern, each phase making the subsequent one possible and easier. First, the category 'languages' was collapsed into 'language' and then into 'literacy'. Related to this reduction of ambition and commitment has been an historical shift in kinds of policy. The steps have been from pragmatic population-servicing policy (Galbally 1978), to society-wide languages policy (NPL), to portfolio-specific policy programs (ALLP), to the present anti-policy programmatic ethos.

These moves each have their specificity and particular histories, individuals, wider trends, extraneous circumstances and events, and configurations of more or less powerful interests. I believe they also reflect a common underlying pattern: the steady erosion of the possibility that in Australia we might evolve a vocabulary of language rights. The 'national policy style' (Howlett 1991) that characterises each governmental setting invests policies with design features that reflect histories and economies of practice (Wilensky 1986) that are unique. The history of language policy in the United States diverges dramatically from Australia's but is still instructive. Policy-making in the United States is located within an overarching matrix of sociocultural experience that Kagan (1991) calls 'adversarial legalism', a style conditioned by expectations that ultimate recourse to legal resolution is both possible and in many arenas probable. This expectation influences new policy as well as the regular requirement for re-authorisation of existing measures. Adversarial contest, adjudicated explicitly, is not a feature of Australian policy-making. Among its formative sources in the US is a tradition of legalistic formalism in relation to rights (Primus 1999) that are elaborated explicitly against amendments to the Constitution, and buttressed by class action law. Language rights in Australia at present derive only from claims to apply locally the provisions of international conventions, specifically towards Indigenous populations. The absence of endogenous provisions for characterising language as a right constrains the use of this device for advancing language questions from community realities to the practices of public institutions. At present there is no vocabulary in any language policy, state or federal, that deploys the language of entitlement. 1990s policy has also weakened even rhetorical or persuasive affirmation of rights. Rights-talk, associating community language practices with the social institutions that would realise persuasive advocacy (Fishman 2001), awaits new social conditions that would facilitate its re-emergence.

The conditions that made earlier participatory policy possible were those in which aggregating identity politics became prominent in Australian political discourse, with new visions of a diverse Australia, active in Asia and conscious of its internal cultural diversity, gaining considerable public following. The cultural imagery was also attached to the idea of Australia independently following its own national interests. Cultural discourse today makes this harder. The dispersed and the multiple are both consequences of the post-modern characterisation of social functioning and these in turn operate to make inscribing diversity within the Australian polity harder, if that diversity seeks to continue intact cultural traditions and constrain cultural hybridity. However, collaboratively based critiques of restrictive language policy, and of the non-democratic modes in which it was produced, are not precluded from achieving new and effective coordination of surviving interest group advocacy. And, as Frawley (this volume) powerfully shows, there is always space for the creative re-appropriation of outsider imposition of how people's 'insider' language and literacy practices should work. Outsider systems can be subverted in new openings of opportunity for the local and the distinctive. A further new possibility emerges not from local pluralism but from globalisation. As the Australian state sidelines Indigenous and minority literacies and languages (Singh, this volume; Scarino & Papademetre, this volume), a continuation of its longstanding practices of neo-colonial cultural appropriation, the homogenisation based on economy and work will be sorely tested this time from outside. Economic globalisation involves massive population transfers (Castles & Miller 1993) and makes diversity, multiculturalism, mobility, and therefore difference, more, rather than less, salient (Giddens 1999).

Australian policy activism will emerge inevitably in the context of new Australian constitutionalism and in the context of republican reconstruction. The Canadian scholar of constitutionalism, Tully (1997), sees essentialised views of culture as 'no longer acceptable', because cultures are not 'separate, bounded and internally uniform' but 'overlapping, interactive and internally negotiated' (p 10). He describes contemporary constitutional demands as the recognition of diversity, difference and pluralism in which constitutionalism is 'an activity, an intercultural dialogue' (p 184).

The effective means for reinscribing professional and community concerns at the centre of language policy will be in remaking disrupted alliances and in critically evaluating the practical consequences of present policy directions. These will gain wider sustenance as the consequences of anti-pluralist policy-making ensure that we will be combating the results of divisiveness in growing educational inequalities. New constitutionalism will utilise a new language of citizenship and rights, substantive and participatory. It is time for truly hard-nosed policy now, for civic life, society and community, within which resides an economy.

Notes

1 The term 'Commonwealth Literacy Policy' refers to the literacy initiatives under Dr David Kemp exemplified by his *Literacy standards in Australia* (1997) which led to the state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers' agreed position on literacy and numeracy (Lo Bianco & Freebody 2001).

2 Funding for the Strategy has been retained by the Howard federal government and announced to last until 2004. The bipartisan continuation represents a considerable success for this area.

3 Saulwick *Age* Poll, 31 May 1994; *Age* Poll 19 June 1996; *Sydney Morning Herald* Poll, 5 November 1996; *Australian* Newspoll, 3 May 1997.

Part 2

Processes, politics and the effects of policy text production

2 Australia's language

Paul Brock

This chapter is written from the perspective of one heavily involved in the construction of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) and the provision of subsequent advice to successive Commonwealth governments on aspects of implementing that policy in the period from 1990 to 1996.

From June 1990 to December 1991, I took leave from my position of Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of New England to become Consultant Adviser on the personal staff of the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins. One of my major responsibilities on the staff was to provide advice on the development of what became *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP). This policy was endorsed by the cabinet of the Commonwealth government on 1 September 1991 (although the month appearing on the printed volumes is August). This chapter focuses only on this period.

Preamble

It seems to me that analysis of public policy is flawed when it:

- is grounded in the inflexible application of a priori principles rooted in some ahistorical or even ideological 'grid', map, or framework (fashionable or otherwise);
- is at worst ignorant of, and at best uninformed by, careful primary source textual analysis, 'forensic' identification, and critiquing of broader forces impinging upon decision-making;
- does not draw upon the published and/or unpublished insights of those who have participated in the evolving processes.

In contributing to the telling of the story of the development of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) from an insider-participant perspective, I willingly acknowledge the obvious corollary that any judgments made in this chapter about the substance of the ALLP and of the processes involved in its construction, while made with honesty and integrity, are not those of a disinterested observer.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to undertake a comprehensive articulation and critique of all of the national policies and programs to be found in the two volumes of the ALLP. I can only give some sense of overview and a few examples of 'insider' intervention and/or support on some issues.[1]

The process of framing government policy at a senior level can be a messy business, far removed from the more insulated atmosphere that produces the kind of writing and analysis one might find in a scholarly journal. I believe that the most interesting writing on public policy comes from people like the former Secretary for Labor in the first Clinton Administration, Professor Robert Reich, who successfully blend the disinterested academic knowledge and scholarship with their nitty-gritty, hands-on experience of having attempted to mould and change public policy within the maelstrom of competing forces that shape the very contexts within which governments have to make their decisions.

The exercise of power in initiating, developing and ultimately implementing policy in a democracy depends on successfully negotiating labyrinthine webs of competing forces and interests. So what one might argue ought to be the most intelligent policy outcome, may not always get the 'tick': a senior public servant's brilliant, carefully crafted policy proposal could get amended, gutted, rewritten, shelved, or even abandoned at any stage of the process of review by his or her immediate superior, by the chief executive officer, by staff in the Minister's office, within the cabinet room, or eventually within the Prime Minister's or Premier's office.

Describing an 'insider'

In a recent collection of essays *Activism and the policy process*, Paul Dugdale has a chapter entitled 'The art of insider activism: Policy activism and the governance of health'. He suggests that the insider policy activist has the opportunity to give effect to the intellectual and professional knowledge, values and commitments he or she brings from 'outside' the governmental process and to draw upon a professional network outside the public service, through *initiating* or *developing* policy directions for submission to the Minister through the relevant senior executive (Dugdale 1998). Dugdale recognises the importance of acknowledging the *substantive* and *political* backgrounds from which such 'insiders' come.

Not having been a public servant careerist, I brought 23 years of 'outsider' *substantive* research and professional experience with me when I became an 'insider' participant in public policy shaping.[4] As an academic for 11 years (following 12 years as a secondary school teacher, head of department, and deputy principal) I had undertaken research which revealed the wide range of forces that can be influential in shaping public policy, from the exposition of theory, to the imposition of political influence, to the impact of charismatic or powerfully imposing individuals, right across the spectrum to the most bizarre conjunction of irrational assumptions and unpredictable coincidences of chance. It was fascinating to be given the opportunity in 1990–91 to step as a *participant* into the kinds of storms I had described and analysed from a more disinterestedly academic *observer* perspective.

Consistent with the general picture painted by Dugdale, like some other ministerial staff I also had an overt *political* background as I'd been a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) for 12 years and had held leadership positions in eight federal and state election campaign teams in the New England region of New South Wales. Endorsed in 1989, I had been the ALP candidate in a vigorous campaign for the very safe National Party seat of New England retained by Ian Sinclair in the 1990 federal election.

Dugdale argues 'it is not possible to know what to do until you are in a position to do it' and that it 'is only though immersion in the circumstances of the field that the policy activist recognises the possibilities for action and achievement available from this position' (Dugdale 1998: 107). I received absolutely no internship or on the job training. It was sink or swim within the cauldron of high pressure that only those who have worked in a high profile cabinet minister's office can fully appreciate.

To Dugdale's description of the role of the insider, one must add that there are people above the policy activist who take the final decisions. So, although as a senior member of the Minister's staff one gets the last bite of the policy 'cherry' coming up from the public service, one's advocacy can still fail if it does not win the approval of the Minister's chief of staff or, ultimately of course, the Minister. For example, the preface to the 1990 Green Discussion Paper (which initiated the process that culminated in the White Paper) which I drafted and which was signed by Dawkins, opened with the statement (DEET 1990: ix):

> It is through language that we develop our thoughts, shape our experience, explore our customs, structure our community, construct our laws, articulate our values and give expression to our hopes and ideals.

But, because of a decision made by a more senior member of the Minister's staff, this was deleted from the text of the foreword of the 1991 White Paper submitted to the Minister for his signature. Similarly, while the preface of the Green Paper had insisted that 'the social, cultural, community, and economic vitality of this nation draws upon a wide variety of other languages' (DEET 1990: ix), the final draft of the White Paper's preface finally placed before the Minister deleted all but 'cultural' from this list. There is a clear, and proper, hierarchy of power within the policy formulation process.

All on the Minister's staff were required to bring specific expertise in, experience of, and commitment to key areas within education and training: there were no vacuous 'neutralists' among Dawkins's advisers. I was given the principal responsibility on the Minister's staff for overseeing the process of developing the language and literacy policy via a Green and then a White Paper, strongly assisted by Dawkins's

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highly talented policy adviser on schooling, Louise Watson who was the longest-standing policy adviser on Dawkins's staff. Louise was, and remains, one of Australia's foremost authorities on national education policy.[3] At that time I was the most recently appointed policy adviser on the Minister's staff and therefore had no track record of success in delivering policy outcomes for Dawkins. Therefore, the esteem in which the Minister held Louise Watson's professional judgment meant that she was able to be a powerful ally when I was arguing for certain policy positions.

The shaping of policy: Rarely is the sailing plain

To reiterate a basic point made above, 'outside' analysis of how public policy is shaped needs to be informed by a sophisticated awareness of the practical and not always logical details, compromises, personalities, flukes, nuances, occasional absurdities, and other forces that can exercise significant impact.

Personal considerations, often allied with raw-edged internal politics, can impede the processes of policy formulation and outweigh more disinterested policy objectives. For example, John Dawkins was one of the key players in the Paul Keating camp during the tense months of developing the challenge to the leadership of Prime Minister Bob Hawke, which reached its fruition in late 1991. I have little doubt that cabinet consideration of some submissions by ministers may have been influenced by questions as to which side a particular minister was on in the battle for supremacy.

The imperatives arising from the shorter-term political cycles in federal politics can also profoundly influence longer-term national policy aspirations and plans.

Key players in the development of The Australian Language and Literacy Policy

It is important to acknowledge the roles, expertise and experience played by key individuals: the policy was not produced by a bland, amorphous bureaucracy.

Dawkins was fortunate in the quality of public servants to whom he entrusted the bureaucratic oversight of the process: without exception, these public servants enjoyed Dawkins's professional trust. Secretary of DEET, Greg Taylor, was considered to be a first-class public servant, as was Deputy Secretary Paul Hickey, who had driven Dawkins's Green Paper on Higher Education and had overseen the process to its fruition. Alan Ruby, then First Assistant Secretary of Schools Division and later Deputy Secretary in the schools arena, was a very talented official. Both Taylor and Ruby have since left the Commonwealth Public Service to accept distinguished international positions.

Anna Kamarul, Head of the DEET branch that oversaw the whole process from Green to White Papers was, and remains, a highly gifted Commonwealth public servant. A lawyer whose first language was Dutch and whose mastery of English as her second language was such that one would have assumed English to have been her first language, she had a sound intellectual grasp of the language and literacy policy issues. Ms Kamarul was ably assisted by two other senior officers with strong academic and professional expertise in the field: Noel Simpson and Vanessa Elwell-Gavins.

Noel Simpson had been a former adult literacy teacher and President of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) from 1984 to 1989 prior to entering the Commonwealth public service to become Director of International Year of Literacy (ILY): he deservedly enjoyed a high national profile in adult literacy. He had been a teacher of English as a second language (ESL) to adults and had been a member of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME). Through his position on ILY, Noel Simpson had had earlier access to Dawkins and had succeeded in convincing the Minister to invest substantial funds into adult literacy, especially in employment programs. As ACAL President, Simpson had strongly urged Joseph Lo Bianco to provide significant funding for adult literacy within the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL).

Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, who had played an important role in assisting Joseph Lo Bianco write the NPL, was a linguist by academic background, had some exposure and some fluency in several languages other than English (including familiarity with four Aboriginal languages and Russian) and was a qualified, practising teacher of ESL to adults.

John Muir, First Assistant Secretary (International Division), had the responsibility of overseeing the work of Kamarul, Elwell-Gavins, Simpson and their team. He was important in driving the whole enterprise forward. While not claiming to have the kind of specific expertise in the subject matter possessed by his staff, Muir played a pivotal role in trusting their professional judgment and backing their policy development.

It needs to be stressed that it was rare then, and I suspect it is even rarer now, for senior Commonwealth public servants working in a particular policy field to have academic and professional expertise and/or experience in that field. The prevalent Commonwealth public service culture seems to assume that there are generic, easily transferable bureaucratic competencies. Indeed, having specific academic/professional knowledge, understanding and skills can end up being perceived as being more of a handicap than an advantage to a public servant. There appears to be a view that senior Commonwealth public servants need to be shuffled around every couple of years to avoid becoming too close to one's work: to escape what is sometimes pejoratively described as 'sector capture'.

Of course, staleness and inertia need to be shaken and revived: staying in one spot for too long can obviously raise problems. But if such strategies are uncritically applied, the subsequent loss of corporate memory expertise can leave the public service even more vulnerable to wheel reinvention, external lobby group campaigns, and to falling into those traps that inevitably open up when form precedes (rather than follows) function in the shaping of policy.

The federal ALP Caucus takes up the cause of adult literacy in English

The International Literacy Year, 1990 — and those of its agendas driven by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) — was a powerful catalyst in the process that led to the ALLP. The Hawke government had been generous in its funding support of ILY and was receptive to the effective lobbying on behalf of adults with literacy problems carried out so effectively by ACAL in general, and Rosie Wickert in particular through the publication in 1989 of her seminal survey on adult literacy *No single measure* (an initiative supported by AACLAME). Though Wickert had been careful to analyse and present her data in a non-sensationalist way (her choice of title *No single measure* pointed to the very complexities of her task) her report produced, not for the first or last time in the history of literacy education in Australia, unbalanced mass media headlines and stories, screaming 'we'll all be roon'd'.

As a result of the success of the ILY, there was a powerful political readiness to do something about adult literacy in English. On 15 May 1990, Elaine Darling, a backbench member of the ALP Employment, Education and Training Caucus Committee, successfully moved a motion within that committee that the Caucus should recognise adult literacy to be a major social justice issue and an important determinant of the benefits accruing to industry and the work force through retraining and reskilling as a result of award restructuring.

The motion had originally been drafted by ACAL and Queensland members had lobbied the Queensland ALP backbencher. The motion recommended, among other things, that the work of ILY be continued, that there be a national consultative council on literacy, and that substantial increases in funding be allocated to adult literacy. As I did not join Dawkins's staff until July, I cannot say how the Minister responded. But I would be confident that he would have welcomed the motion.

Whether the government might respond (and, if so, how) would depend heavily on the views, knowledge, skill and commitment of the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins.

John Dawkins

The paramount mover and shaker in generating the process that led to the ALLP was the Minister John Dawkins himself. By the time he had left the Employment, Education and Training portfolio at the end of 1991 to become Treasurer under Prime Minister Keating, Dawkins had held the Commonwealth Education portfolio longer than any other Labor Party minister had done since Federation.

I found Dawkins to be a complex character. He was a splendidly lateral thinker. He was capable of displaying considerable charm and unpretentiousness as well as their opposites, though no doubt this is a mixture frequently found within executive political, bureaucratic, or corporate worlds.

Neal Blewett has recently published an assessment of his former centre-left cabinet colleague (Blewett 1999). Obviously Dr Blewett had known Dawkins for a much longer time than I had, and had occupied a more privileged place from which to assess the character and contribution of his former colleague (it would be interesting to see Dawkins's assessment of Dr Blewett). Here is Blewett's pen portrait (p16):

> Besides Keating the great reforming minister in the Labor governments, Dawkins was a man whose zeal and ambition for change were yoked to an abrasive and pugnacious approach that added to the turbulence that surrounded him. A moody, self-contained figure, contemptuous of both the foolish and the spineless, he was little loved in the Caucus or even in is own centre-left faction, surviving on his talents alone.

While argument might be engaged on the degree of accuracy or temperateness of this assessment, I have no great difficulty recognising some components within Blewett's pen portrait. 'Zeal', 'ambition for change', 'abrasive', 'pugnacious', 'turbulence', 'moody', 'self-contained' all ring true with me. But I would add 'brave' and 'fearless in the pursuit of what he, if not others, believed to be right'. And Dawkins was by no means a 'Robinson Crusoe' inside Parliament House in his being politically ambitious, or for not suffering 'wisely' those he perceived to be 'foolish' or 'spineless'. Of course, accusations of folly and cowardice are sometimes more easy to assert than they are to justify. And very few politicians are much 'loved' anyway, whether the context be a faction, a caucus, a cabinet, or the electorate at large.

Dawkins relished challenging his senior public servants to question, challenge and contest his own ideas. But Dawkins's encyclopaedic grasp of vision and detail right across his vast portfolio meant that his senior officers had to be well briefed to 'take him on': they usually were, and were comfortable to enter the fray. He eschewed any 'yes minister' culture in his dealings with senior officials — and they respected him for this. He was one of the architects of Hawke's downfall yet, as we are told in Peter Fitzsimons' splendid biography of Kim Beazley, after the successful vote to dump Hawke and to anoint Keating was announced in Caucus, Dawkins 'was seen to have tears in his eyes' (Fitzsimons 1998: 364).

From a wealthy and rather privileged background, Dawkins was an unwavering advocate of Aboriginal rights, intolerant of what he considered to be humbug, and a staunch fighter for the opening up of education and training opportunities for those experiencing economic, social, and cultural disadvantage.

Dawkins had been buoyed by the relative ease with which he had got his way in reforming higher education in the latter 1980s through his only previous foray into a Commonwealth Green Paper–White Paper policy process. This was probably just as much a comment on the higher education sector's then political naivete, lack of coherence, strategic insouciance, and the territorial ambitions of those Vice-Chancellors eager to 'capture' vulnerable colleges of advanced education, as it was a comment on the success of the breathtaking sweep and scope of Dawkins's ambition and will as articulated in that higher education Green Paper and as successfully executed by the subsequent White Paper.

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He rightly regarded school education as the primary policy responsibility of state and territory governments which then bore 85 per cent of the cost of public schooling provision. Dawkins had consistently rejected the approach of those previous Commonwealth ministers who had tried to exercise strategic leverage over state/territory policy through allocation of the relatively small amounts of Commonwealth funding. He generally agreed with the states' and territories' arguments that such policies were heavy-handed, interventionist attempts to get the 'tail to wag the dog'. He also knew that the states/territories could readily substitute Commonwealth inputs for their own expenditure, thus neutralising any desired Commonwealth policy goal.

Perhaps Dawkins's most clear public articulation of his views about the roles that the Commonwealth should, and should not, play in national schools policy can be found in his two seminal publications *Strengthening Australian schools*, and *The impact of Commonwealth imperatives on school education* in the University of Western Sydney's Macarthur Lecture Series, 29 August 1990. In the latter address, for example, Dawkins publicly eschewed any notion that his role should be one merely of 'Minister for Education Finance'. On the contrary, he argued that the Commonwealth's role in education was 'more than simply an economic exercise' (Dawkins 1990b: 5).

To quote from South Australia's 'Charter for Public Schooling'

> *the prime purpose of education is the development of the human intellect in all its dimensions — social, cultural, moral, emotional and physical.*
>
> It is a basic tenet of Labor's philosophy that since a good education enriches the lives of individuals, all should be entitled to experience such an education.
>
> To the extent that education provides important skills, develops critical awareness and is a necessary condition for understanding individual and group rights, then it is of great importance to the less privileged that they have equal opportunities to obtain an education which provides these benefits.
>
> The key concepts which I propose we should consider in exploring the Commonwealth's role in implementing these broad ideals and aspirations would be as *catalyst, broker, communicator* and *leader*. (Dawkins 1990b: 5)

One with flair for 'big picture' reform of policy (though, I believe, much less interested in the drudgery of pursuing the vision via the consequential nitty-gritty details of program implementation), Dawkins saw an opportunity to pull together within the one policy framework the disparate areas of child and adolescent literacy, adult literacy, workplace-based literacy programs, adult ESL and Adult Migrant English Programs (that had been controlled by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs), employment programs, the adult and community education literacy initiatives, languages other than English (LOTE), as well as to place an increased emphasis on Asian and Torres Strait Islander languages and to establish some new advisory bodies. Dawkins insisted, correctly in my view, that the proposal he eventually took to cabinet in 1991 was both broader in its terrain and far more generously resourced than the NPL had been.

Dawkins had a strong commitment to placing literacy in English, especially adult literacy, at the top of the policy tree. He wanted to give it the prominence previously enjoyed by the policy domains of ESL and LOTE in the NPL. Mary Crawford, an influential member of the Caucus Employment, Education and Training Committee, herself a former school teacher, also focused the Minister's attention on children's literacy within an early intervention and preventative approach.

Dawkins argued that there was a need to endorse more formally and unambiguously the assertion that Australian English was the principal language of Australia, and that the personal, social, cultural, economic, and democratic possibilities of enhancement for every Australian depended primarily, though not exclusively, upon their being proficient in English literacy. Well before the later proclamations of his Coalition government successor David Kemp, John Dawkins insisted that literacy in English for all Australians must be a necessary, if not sufficient, overarching first goal of a national language and literacy policy.

In making this emphasis, Dawkins was not seeking to downplay the importance of the roles played by other languages within the Australian community. But he did not champion the NPL goal that *every* Australian should aspire to acquire a second language. I believe he saw himself as being more resistant than some of his other colleagues to the pressures brought to bear on the Hawke government by ethnic and/or multicultural lobbying, and was uncomfortable about some of the arguments about multicultural Australia in the context of claims that Australia should be a multilingual society. This was to generate some controversy after the release of the White Paper.

The National Policy on Languages (NPL)

This quite remarkable and pioneering document has been covered extensively elsewhere in this book, and so is not examined in close detail in the following pages. Written in only five months by Joseph Lo Bianco with the assistance of Vanessa Elwell-Gavins and other Commonwealth officers, this document earned, and retains, a justifiably distinguished international reputation within the field of language policy.

The NPL was submitted to the then Minister for Education, Senator Susan Ryan, in 1986 and published in 1987. It provided a scholarly and comprehensive underpinning to subsequent language and literacy policy. It would be built upon, amended and, in some cases, moved away from four years later in *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP). Most, but not all, of the NPL's four principles would be incorporated within those of the ALLP. The last of the NPL's programs had been due to conclude in mid-1991.

AACLAME and the Asia Studies Council

By 1990 Dawkins wanted to broaden the source of policy advice on literacy and languages that up to then AACLAME had provided. AACLAME had been set up by Senator Susan Ryan, Dawkins's predecessor as Minister for Education, to:

- advise the Minister on the implementation and effectiveness of the NPL;
- monitor the NPL; and
- act as a forum on national needs and priorities 'on languages policy and multicultural education' (AACLAME 1990: 26).

Particularly because of the significant impact in Australia of the 1990 International Year of Literacy (ILY), Dawkins felt that there was a need to place greater public policy emphasis upon and provide greatly enhanced and resourced program delivery provision to *literacy in English* than had been experienced in the programs generated by the NPL.

Furthermore, Dawkins wanted to pull the 'languages' and 'literacy' policy arms closer together. Later I discuss some differences, in substance and emphasis, between the NPL and the ALLP.

It is not unusual for there to be tensions between a minister's department and any advisory bodies that the Minister may have inherited or which he or she establishes. Both 'sides' have strongly vested interests to win the 'ear' of the Minister. Dawkins inherited two such advisory bodies: AACLAME and the Asian Studies Council (ASC). The former was chaired by Joseph Lo Bianco and the latter by Professor Stephen Fitzgerald: both sought funding from and influence with Dawkins for AACLAME and ASC, respectively. Both talented and experienced individuals had enjoyed considerable credibility with the federal Labor governments from 1983. Both enjoyed that kind of direct and personal ministerial access that has the potential to make senior bureaucrats within a government department uneasy, or suspicious, or even antagonistic.

Fitzgerald had been a pioneer in developing Sino-Australian relations, and had exercised considerable influence as Australia's first Ambassador to China during the Labor government of Gough Whitlam, 1972–75. He was arguably, at that time, the most influential Australian advocate for Asian languages and cultural studies. Professor Fitzgerald's contribution to putting Asian studies on the map in Australia has been very significant. He, in turn, was an academic mentor of Kevin Rudd who became the driving force behind the establishment of the national COAG (Council of Australian Governments) Asian Languages program in the 1990s. Mr Rudd is now an influential ALP member of the Federal Parliament.

I suspect that in early 1990 the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) may have proposed a Green Paper–White Paper process to Dawkins as one way for DEET to curb the influence of AACLAME and the ASC, and to regain the language and literacy agendas initiative through the establishment of a language and literacy policy driven by a reorganised and strengthened Department, rather than by the outside advisory bodies and their Chairs. As any such maneuvering would have occurred before my joining Dawkins's staff, I cannot speak authoritatively on this. But such a hypothesis is not inconsistent either with public service traditions or with subsequent developments.

On 6 April 1990, Prime Minister Hawke wrote to Dawkins expressing his wish to maintain and develop the policy on languages, as had been stated in the Governor-General's speech at the opening of Parliament earlier in the year. In May, Gerry Hand, Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, had written to Dawkins suggesting a joint review of the ethnic skills program be carried out by DEET and Hand's Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), and that both Ministers make a joint cabinet submission on the development of the NPL.

AACLAME's report: The National Policy on Languages, December 1987 — March 1990

In June, Dawkins held discussions with senior officials in the DEET to discuss the future of the NPL. The background to these discussions was that in May Dawkins had received AACLAME's report *The National Policy on Languages: December 1987 — March 1990: Report to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training* (which was not publicly released till later in the year).

The figures published in the report gave substance to Dawkins's view that these programs had focused much more intensively upon languages other than English for all, than upon the other three NPL principles, especially 'English for all' through child, adolescent, adult, workplace, and community *literacy in English* policy and practice. $23.2 million of NPL program funding had been allocated to the Australian Second Language Learning Program (ASLLP) between 1987 and 1991. This constituted over 50 per cent of the total NPL program funding. The National Aboriginal Languages Program (NALP) had been allocated $3.5 million, and the Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Supplementation Program (MACSP) $4.5 million. The Asian Studies Program had been assigned $7.7 million. The 'English for all' NPL principle found expression only in the $3.92 million allocated to the NPL Adult Literacy Action Program (AACLAME 1990: 3).

In comparison with what the ALLP would later set out to achieve, this report indicated (AACLAME 1990: 5–6) that only modest success had been achieved in addressing the problems identified by the NPL. These problems had been:

- worrying levels of illiteracy among speakers of English as a first language;
- poor command of English among both recent and long-term immigrants of non-English speaking background and many Aborigines;
- lack of skills in second languages among English-speaking Australians;
- the erosion of linguistic resources through the neglect of the potential for bilingualism among children who speak a language other than English;
- the imminent extinction of many Aboriginal languages, the accompanying loss of

a significant element of Australia's cultural heritage, and reduced educational achievements for Aboriginal children;

- the lack of sufficient emphasis on practical communication skills in courses in some languages;
- the unmet needs for language services such as interpreting and translating, language testing and libraries for non-English speaking and multilingual readers;
- the need to identify and resolve problems created by one or more of the following: geographical isolation, cultural isolation, and intellectual, learning, physical and/or sensory disabilities, as these relate to communication.

It is difficult to find details in the report of specific outcomes that might have been achieved from the expenditure of funds from 1987 to 1990. Although doubt is expressed in the report about the accuracy of the figures, outlays for the years had been as follows: 1987–88 — $15 million; 1988–89 — $28.65 million; 1988–89 — $27.3 million; 1990–91 — $23 million (AACLAME 1990: 2). But only approximately $40 million of this had gone into programs *specifically initiated* by NPL funding in those four years. The remaining approximately $75 million came from the pre-existing program: English as a Second Language (ESL) program (New Arrivals Element).

In striking contrast, the magnitude of difference in scope between the NPL and the ALLP can be illustrated by the four year figures for the latter's implementation: 1991–92 — $278.46 million; 1992–93 — $320.51 million; 1993–94 — $333.33 million. It must be said, however, that not all of this was 'new' money: the ALLP picked up some already existing 'buckets' of funds in around twenty programs that previously had been located in other parts of DEET.

In its report AACLAME had sought extension of its mandate to 1995. In June DEET advised Dawkins that the language and literacy advisory mechanisms had to be broadened to include the Asian Studies Council and the National Consultative Council in ILY. The Department seemed to be favouring a broader ambit which would include meeting emerging national priorities and pulling together the 20 DEET programs with a languages or literacy focus within a more coherent policy framework, within the contexts of schools, higher education universities, TAFE/AMES institutions, labour market programs, and community groups.

The Department made it clear that it believed that the then current arrangements under the NPL would be inadequate for any concerted efforts in six areas of national priority (author's private papers):

- adult literacy (particularly within the workforce);
- development of a coherent policy framework for existing DEET language and literacy programs;
- greater vocational orientation within the AMEP;
- need to improve the poor articulation of LOTE courses within and between primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors;
- lack of linguistic proficiency of LOTE graduates at all levels;
- need to assess delivery mechanisms and effectiveness of outcomes for clients.

The Green Paper — The language of Australia: Discussion paper on an Australian literacy and language policy for the 1990s

In August 1990, cabinet agreed that Dawkins should prepare a discussion paper that would rationalise and refocus the wide array of literacy and language programs. In September, Dawkins got cabinet to agree to a Green Paper–White Paper process.

On 7 September, Dawkins announced a $40 million package of incentives to mark ILY Day and announced 'a wide-ranging review of Australia's languages and literacies policies' (Dawkins 1990a) which would begin following the publication of a Green Policy Discussion Paper due for release in October. The Minister said the national consultative process would lead to the publication of a 'White Policy Paper early next year'. In fact the Green Paper appeared in December 1990 and the White Paper was endorsed by cabinet on September 1 1991 (though the date on the printed volumes is August).

In publicly launching the Green Paper on 26 September 1990, Dawkins made his priorities quite clear in his official press release (1990a). He addressed all of the issues raised above in the AACLAME report and by his Department:

> The Green Paper will examine the focus and content of existing Federal Government literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), languages other than English and Aboriginal language programs.
>
> ...It will reinforce the national priority of improving literacy standards and proficiency in English as well as the principles of a multicultural Australia...
>
> In this, International Literacy Year, there has been a heightened awareness of the importance of English language proficiency to Australia's social and economic development...
>
> English is the national language of Australia and we must ensure that all Australians achieve as high a standard as possible in English language skills...
>
> The aim of this review is to improve this nation's ability to establish sound international links of all kinds, culturally enrich our society, and improve opportunities for thousands of Australians to enjoy a fuller life by ensuring they have good English and language skills.

Dawkins was keen to canvass as broad a range of options as possible in the Green Paper. He was conscious of the diversity of views that could be found in the Australian community. At the end of each policy section there followed two headings: 'Strategies' and 'Options'. Some of the latter were genuinely innovative and speculative. Others were deliberately provocative to generate discussion on controversial issues, rather than proposals that the Minister was determined to adopt. An example of the latter was 'making a language compulsory to Year 12, in addition to the already compulsory

English subject' (DEET 1990: 42). Collectively, the 73 strategies and options ranged across territory broader than that traversed in the NPL's programs.

Consultations

The process of consultation and review of the Green Paper was comprehensive. Eventually, over 340 submissions were received, in addition to scores of consultations around Australia. Advice was sought from the national Councils of Ministers: the Australian Education Council and the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee. All state and territory government and non-government systems of education and training, peak professional associations, industry and trade union bodies, ethnic community and school groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and education groups, and the Vice-Chancellors' Committee were consulted, as were key Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities. Early drafts were considered by a group of distinguished Australian academics in the fields of language and literacy, English as a second language, languages other than English, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

It was broadly agreed by individuals and groups responding to the Green Paper that adequate proficiency in English — reading, writing, speaking, and listening — is essential if individuals are to participate effectively in the workforce, in education and training, and in broader community life.

There was also a widespread view that Australia had to do more to strengthen its capacity in languages other than English, though there was little general support for making the study of a second language *mandatory* in all schools.

That there were clearly competing forces in the language and literacy terrain soon became obvious during the consultations following the release of the Green Paper. For example, reference has already been made to the more established 'European' languages other than English constituency on the one hand, and the burgeoning claims being made for Asian languages on the other. Then there were the tussles between the non-English speaking background constituency (more or less loosely aligned with the former) and the adult literacy 'empire' riding the roller-coaster wave generated by ILY. The school and adult education contexts for literacy teaching and learning were not always well understood by teachers in the respective opposing context.

Drafting the White Paper — Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP)

To reiterate Dugdale's observations noted earlier (Dugdale 1998), the insider policy activist has the opportunity to give effect to the intellectual and professional knowledge, values and commitments he or she brings from outside the governmental process and to draw upon a professional network outside the public service, through *initiating* or *developing* policy directions for submission to the Minister.

Indeed, I was particularly committed to ensuring that concepts of literacy and language theory and practice that enjoyed scholarly support within the *substantive* academic milieu would win out within the *political* context against any attempts to pander to uninformed, populist prejudice. This is not to claim that there are not legitimate differences of view within the scholarly world: of course there are. But there are areas of agreement in face of some of the simplistic views — especially in literacy — that too often enjoy respectability within the media: especially in the tabloid press and on some talk-back radio programs.

I successfully suggested to the Minister that one of the foremost international experts in the academic, professional and policy-making contexts of language and literacy policy, Professor Ian Pringle, Director of the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa, should be invited to Canberra to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Green Paper and disinterested advice to the group of us drafting the White Paper. Professor Pringle's international perspective, scholarly and disinterested response to submissions, and vast experience in critiquing public language and literacy policies, proved to be an invaluable contribution to the process.

Why two volumes?

There were two interdependent reasons why the policy appeared in two volumes. The first was our belief, supported in the consultations, that it was essential that the policy be grounded in well-researched, scholarly, comprehensive argument. The NPL had set a fine standard in this regard.

The second was Dawkins's fury when it dawned on him that he would be taking into cabinet a document of over 100 pages. Earlier I had sent to him, via the Senior Adviser, three equally long drafts for his approval, all of which Dawkins had returned, apparently happily, via the Senior Adviser. Suddenly, the Minister insisted on taking in only a twenty or so pages document: Anna Kamarul and I were given our first opportunity of experiencing directly the Minister's famous temper. But, as usual, he soon got over it, as his staff and bureaucratic advisers usually did as well.

Anna Kamarul and I persuaded Dawkins to retain the extended argument and evidence of the fruits of research, scholarship, and community consultations as well as a more descriptive account of the contexts within which the policy had been framed that, we believed, would provide a comprehensive articulation of the policy and programs. His very sensible compromise was to authorise the companion volume to the policy paper (128 pages) to supplement the twenty-five page *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*.

What's in a name?

Illustrative of the kind of bizarre things that can leave indelible prints on policy was the choice of title. The original working title for *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* had been the *Australian Language Policy*. 'Language' was envisaged in the most generic, inclusive sense of that word. But Dawkins ruled this out immediately. He quickly pointed out that the inevitable acronym 'ALP' would invite blistering accusations of overtly politicising the policy. So the phrase 'language and literacy' was deployed to provide a safer acronym.

But the use of the abstract noun 'language' rather than the common noun (plural) 'languages' would later be pointed to by those who accused the Policy, unfairly in my view, of espousing a strictly monolingual future for Australia. Of course Dawkins later did little to dispel this belief when in a speech to a seminar in Sydney, instead of recognising the primacy (among other languages) of Australian English in the Australian society, he expressed the view that Australia was a monolingual society. This was an opinion that was self-evidently false, and which was not advocated in the White Paper when it appeared.

An overview of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP)

In its scope and especially in the relative largesse of its allocation of resources the ALLP went beyond the terrain traversed through the implementation of the NPL, with the singular exception that the ALLP dropped the NPL principle of urging the acquisition of a second language by *all* Australians.

Very early in the White Paper (DEET 1991: 2), the government listed what it saw to be the problems that the ALLP would set out to address:

> What is needed now is action rather than further analysis or review. The case for action is clear and compelling:
>
> - approximately one million Australian adults have literacy problems which prevent them from participating effectively in the workforce, in education and training, and in community life;
> - in the absence of some formal certification of literacy achievement at the exit points of primary and secondary education, we do not have a clear picture of the literacy levels of our children;
> - approximately 360,000 adult immigrants have little, if any, English. Two-thirds of these are not in the labour force and the rest are mainly in low-skilled and poorly paid jobs, and are heavily at risk in the industry restructuring process;

- many children in our schools are involved in English as a second language (ESL) programs but more assistance is required;
- despite our multicultural society and our large number of speakers of languages other than English, Australians generally have a poor understanding of other languages, cultures and countries, particularly those of our own region;
- only one student in nine persists with the study of a language other than English to Year 12;
- we need to maintain, enhance, and prevent the further loss or neglect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, which are an essential part of our national heritage and culture.

The White Paper set out more than $333 million in policy and programs across four national goals within a reordering of priorities and new directions in national policies and research.

Australian English was asserted to be the national language, while the policy proposed measures to increase the nation's capacity in languages other than English. Dawkins claimed that the policy would 'help address the English literacy problems of more than one million adult Australians — including about 360,000 residents who have little if any English — and boost our capacity and expertise in languages other than English and strengthen Aboriginal languages' (Dawkins 1991a).

> The new policy includes such measures as using television to deliver adult literacy services, special grants to schools for senior students studying priority languages other than English, development of a national English curriculum statement and arrangements for school literacy proficiency assessment, more funding and support for adult literacy, a boost in English as a Second Language school programs, new language and literacy advisory bodies and increased support for English for adult migrants.

Dawkins's official announcement addressed each of the ALLP's four goals, pertaining to literacy in Australian English; languages other than English; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages; and translating services, research, and other bodies.

One of Dawkins's major initiatives was to increase significantly the adult ESL funding for job preparation. For quite some time the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) had struggled to assist job seekers who lacked basic English literacy skills. I believe that the Department of Employment, Education and Training had felt that the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), driven by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA), had not delivered vocationally relevant English language training in sufficient quantity and quality.

Dawkins decided to expand ESL support for jobseekers under the then existing Early Intervention Program into what became the Special Intervention Program (SIP) under the ALLP. Indeed, it is the view of one senior Commonwealth public servant who was then heavily involved in the construction and implementation of the ALLP, that the job-seeker ESL enhancements and the adult literacy funding were the highlights of the policy.

The four goals of the ALLP

The NPL had four principles:

- English for all;
- support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages;
- a language other than English for all;
- equitable and widespread language services.

The 1990 Green Paper had but three goals (DEET 1990: xiii):

1. All Australians should attain and maintain competence in a range of contexts in spoken and written forms of English.
2. The learning of languages other than English in Australia must be substantially increased to enhance educational outcomes and communication both within the Australian community and internationally.
3. Those Aboriginal languages still actively transmitted to and used by children should be maintained and developed. All others should be recorded, where possible, for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

There had been, therefore, two major differences between the Green Paper and the NPL. The latter's ambitious goal about learning a language other than English (see below) had been dropped. Secondly, there had been no reference to language services in the goals enunciated by the Green Paper.

After reviewing evidence provided in hundreds of submissions and consultations over eight months, as well as seeking and receiving formal advice from all state and territory governments, the White Paper established four goals involving amendments to the earlier three inspired by the NPL principles, and a new fourth one (DEET 1991: 4, 14, 19, 20):

Goal 1 All Australian residents should develop and maintain a level of spoken and written English which is appropriate for a range of contexts, with the support of education and training programs addressing their diverse learning needs.

Goal 2 The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication within both the Australian and the international community.

Goal 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted. Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way, for example, through recording. These activities should only occur where the speakers so desire and in consultation with their community, for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

Goal 4 Language services provided through interpreting and translating, print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved.

There is not the opportunity in a chapter of this length to articulate these goals in detail. I will merely focus on a few aspects.

Goal 1: Literacy in Australian English for all

The ALLP and its programs made it very clear that literacy in Australian English for all was the number one priority. It set down eight objectives associated with this first goal (DEET 1991, companion volume: 33–4):

a Achieving appropriate outcomes for both children and adults, so that they can participate effectively in education and training, the workforce and the community.

b Developing the infrastructure necessary to ensure quality provision through research, curriculum and materials development (including integration of literacy development across the curricula in schools and tertiary education), teacher supply and professional development, and the processes of assessment, evaluation and accreditation.

c Improving access to and articulation between appropriate English learning programs for people of non-English speaking background.

d Providing specific support to assist Aboriginal people to acquire spoken and written English through programs appropriate to their learning needs.

e Improving the forms and levels of collaboration among providers of literacy and ESL and between different education and training sectors.

f Enhancing the awareness of industry and the community of the importance of literacy in English and increasing the participation of industry and community groups in literacy development.

g Promoting high standards of use of Australian English.

h Promoting the use of plain English in all education and training programs and in all public activities.

Literacy in schools

In view of some of the allegations by Dr Kemp that the previous federal Labor governments had virtually ignored literacy in schools, it has to be pointed out that, in cooperation with states and territories, the Commonwealth policy set out to:

- help teachers provide special literacy assistance to primary and junior secondary school students experiencing difficulties reading and writing English;
- use $5.5 million new funding for Early Intervention Strategies to assist children having literacy difficulties before the end of Year 3;

- develop a national curriculum statement for English and establish national proficiency standards and achievement profiles relevant for the various states of schooling;
- develop arrangements for the comprehensive assessment of student capability in literacy and the regular reporting of progress and results at the end of primary school and Year 9;
- provide almost $1.4 million over the next three years for innovative projects in children's literacy. (DEET 1991)

Definition of literacy

One example of an 'insider' commitment to a position that became national policy concerned the issue of how to define literacy. The Green paper (DEET 1990: 4) had adapted the ILY formula into a working definition.

> Based on a generally accepted international usage, and adapted from Australia's ILY program, the working definition is:
>
> **Literacy** involves the integration of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations.
>
> **Functional literacy** means the ability to read, write, speak and listen well enough to accomplish every day literacy tasks in our society in different contexts, such as the workplace or the classroom.

Noel Simpson (who, because of his former career in adult literacy education, brought his own 'insider' insights) and I did not feel that this provided sufficient coverage of the richness and complexity of what being literate in Australian English could and should mean. This was certainly a position also supported by feedback from submissions and consultations. So, in the companion volume to the policy paper, we drafted a more comprehensive section on issues associated with defining literacy that took heed of what we believed to be a scholarly consensus across the field at that time (DEET 1991, companion volume).

Among the various amplifications we included the notion of 'critical thinking'. We stressed the notion of 'effective literacy' to raise the concept above the reductionist, lowest-common-denominator expectations so often associated with the term 'functional literacy'.

> Australian English is the variety of English which has evolved in Australia in response to the Australian physical, social and cultural environment. Within it, there are further varieties, including **Standard Australian English**, which are spoken and recognised by most native speakers of English in Australia.
>
> Australian English also includes varieties of **Aboriginal English**, used by Aboriginal people. This is a set of varieties of English ranging from forms

> virtually indistinguishable from Standard Australian English, to forms which non-Aboriginal people find difficult to understand without special instruction. For many people who speak only Aboriginal English, it has social values and cultural properties equivalent to those of Australian indigenous and creolised languages.
>
> Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of numbers and basic mathematical signs and symbols within text.
>
> Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening, and critical thinking with reading and writing. **Effective literacy** is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual's lifetime.
>
> All Australians need to have effective literacy in English, not only for their personal benefit and welfare but also for Australia to achieve its social and economic goals.
>
> One may acquire literacy in many languages. Some Australians are literate in languages other than English, including Aboriginal languages, as well as or instead of English. For many Australians of non-English-speaking background, the development of initial literacy in the first language is desirable for personal development as well as for development of literacy in English.
>
> Throughout the Policy Information Paper and companion volume, unless otherwise specified, the term 'literacy' is used to mean literacy in English. (DEET 1991, companion volume: 9)

The companion volume (DEET 1991, companion volume: 32–60) provides a quite comprehensive overview of the wide range of complex issues associated with types of literacy (or rather, literacies), the contexts within which they must be considered as well as the extent of literacy, the causes of literacy difficulties, the assessment of literacy proficiency, and policy priorities, both in the child and adult policy frameworks. English as a Second Language issues enjoy similarly discursive analysis in the companion volume.

Standards

Another issue for 'insider' intervention was the question of how to maintain 'standards' in Australian English usage. Dawkins was personally appalled by what he perceived to be the extent of 'Americanisation' of our national language. He was strongly attracted to the idea of establishing an Australian equivalent of the Academie Francaise to monitor and definitively regulate Australian English usage. We were able to persuade him that this would prove to be a futile exercise and that, instead, he should support existing exemplary work being undertaken by the Macquarie Dictionary's Advisory Board. He agreed, therefore, to provide $100,000 annually through the renamed National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) to:

> …assist the Style Council (run by the Macquarie Dictionary's Advisory Board) consolidate and expand the work it currently undertakes to promote high standards of use of Australian English in all public and professional contexts. (DEET 1991: 21)

Goal 2: Languages other than English

A particular ambition of Dawkins was to attempt to destroy the simplistic categorisation of languages into 'little boxes' of those called 'community', or those called 'economic', or those called 'cultural', and so on. The ALLP also emphasised the need for proficiency in the use of the language, not merely knowledge *about* language.

What is notable about this goal is what the ALLP does *not* say. One of the four principles of the NPL had been that:

> …the study of at least one language in addition to English ought to be an expected part of the educational experience of all Australian students, ideally continuously throughout the years of compulsory education. (Lo Bianco 1987: 120)

The ALLP goal is considerably less ambitious:

> The learning of languages other than English in Australia must be substantially increased to enhance educational outcomes and communication both within the Australian community and internationally. (DEET 1991: 14)

In line with the emphasis of the NPL, an earlier draft of the foreword prepared by the Minister's Department had included the following sentence: 'We must all embrace the need to learn a second language' (author's papers). But in light of the Minister's position on this matter, this was changed to the weaker assertion that many more Australians need to learn a second language (DEET 1991, companion volume: 61–2).

The ALLP has two targets for languages other than English.

1. By the year 2000, the proportion of Year 12 students studying a language other than English will increase to 25%.
2. By the year 2000, all Australians will have the opportunity to learn a language other than English appropriate to their needs.

As Dawkins's press release (1991a) indicated, in order to pursue the first target the ALLP would:

> …provide school systems an annual grant of $300 per each Year 12 language student (up to a ceiling of 25 per cent of the Year 12 population) who completed at Year 12 a designated priority language. State Education

> Ministers will be able to select up to eight languages as priorities from the following: Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. These funds will be able to be spent at the discretion of school authorities.

The amount made available per student under the approach adopted by Dawkins was not sufficient to underpin any major languages program and could never be more than an incentive for states to follow the desired policy direction, and a reward for those states that successfully encouraged their students to complete Year 12 languages. As the payment was made on the basis of number of students enrolled it involved no intervention in state government jurisdictions over education systems. To Dawkins, this was consistent with his view of the Commonwealth's role as a policy 'leader' rather than a 'meddler' in national schools policy.

National 'priority languages'

In the light of the 'urban myth' about the selection of the 14 national 'priority languages' that they were arbitrarily imposed on the states, and territories by the Commonwealth, it is worth noting the process whereby this particular decision was made. It also serves as another example of Dawkins's view about the preferred brokerage role of the Commonwealth as a leader rather than as a meddler.

The NPL had identified nine 'languages of wider teaching' (DEET 1991, companion volume: 76): Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Modern Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. The Asian Studies Council had identified seven 'first tier' languages: Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese. The 'second tier' languages consisted of Hindi, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese.

Dawkins sought formal advice from all states and territories as to their own priority languages. South Australia came up with a number in excess of twenty. The five languages of French, German, Indonesian, Chinese, and Japanese were common languages of priority in all systems. Italian was common to all except, surprisingly, Queensland.

Dawkins decided to give national priority languages status to the languages common within the state/territory jurisdictions and according to a principle of there being an equal number of European and Asian languages, plus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and Arabic. The European languages were French, German, Italian, Modern Greek, Russian, and Spanish. The Asian languages were Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese.

Quality of languages teaching and learning

The ALLP, building on the platform of the NPL and subsequent research, reviews and reports, provided a comprehensive and visionary approach to improving the quality of languages teaching and learning in Australian schools, TAFE colleges, and universities. Expenditure on school LOTE programs handsomely exceeded the NPL funded programs.

But the ALLP also clearly noted the then deficiencies and obstacles to the provision of quality languages teaching and learning. The companion volume comprehensively, and in a plain-speaking way, detailed the significant disincentives to languages study then operating in Australian schools and universities (DEET 1991, companion volume: 72):

> Increasing the numbers of people with language skills takes more than the formulation of language policies. Language learning has a reputation for being boring, too hard, 'only for the bright kids' and 'not relevant'. Many children find that language learning takes too much time and too much effort to be rewarding. Levels of attrition at school, in TAFE and at university tend, therefore, to be high. There is no point attempting to increase the numbers studying languages if most of the students are 'unwilling conscripts'. Levels of attrition will inevitably remain high and our language proficiency nationally will remain low.

The ALLP referred to the draft discussion paper *Report of an investigation into disincentives to language learning at senior secondary level* (Tuffin & Wilson 1989) which identifies a long list of major impediments to learning languages for senior secondary students (see DEET 1991, companion volume: 72–3).

Some reflections

Dawkins expected, with confidence, that his Department of Employment, Education and Training would effectively implement and oversight the ALLP and its programs, and he hoped that the renamed National Languages and Literacy Institute could expand upon its previous work with the fillip of extra funding. But it was particularly the two new councils he created within the fourth goal, the Asia in Australia Council (given the quaint acronym AsIA) and the Australian Language and Literacy Council within the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) to which he would look in subsequent years for language and literacy policy advice from beyond the public service arena.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs subsequently established under the ALLP. It can be said nearly a decade later, however, that while some of the programs have survived and even thrived, quite a number of the initiatives have either disappeared or have failed to win continued support under the two federal Coalition government administrations.

Literacy

Most of those well-funded literacy programs associated with labour market programs under the ALLP and later *Working nation* have been abolished. But others, such as the funding of literacy assessment of school students and the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) have been retained and, in some cases, enhanced. The Howard governments have built on the pioneering work of the Hawke and Keating governments, for example Keating's *Working nation* which established the National Schools English Literacy Survey (NSELS) in enhancing the assessment of the literacy of schoolchildren.

Under both Labor and especially the two subsequent Coalition governments, there has been an overwhelming emphasis upon the need for children to acquire effective literacy skills from an early age. Establishing the processes of identifying, assessing and reporting benchmarks of literacy performance at key stages in schooling has become a national priority. But the Commonwealth government has also been criticised for emphasising lowest common denominator horizons and deploying myth-making tactics in the literacy in schools agenda (cf Brock 1998).

Addressing the needs of adults with literacy difficulties has continued to be a focus of subsequent Commonwealth governments, fuelled additionally by the results of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 1996 national survey *Aspects of literacy* which was part of an international adult literacy survey (ABS 1997a, 1997b). There has been a major revamping of the AMEP program that has been offered for tender to enable private providers to compete directly with states/territory based public provision.

Languages

Nearly a decade later a number of things can be said with confidence about Commonwealth languages policy and programs under the second national goal of the ALLP. Many of the teaching and learning problems and disincentives associated with the teaching and learning of languages that were identified in the companion volume remain unconquered. Neither of the two specific national targets set in 1991 for the Year 2000 has been hit: the arrows have fallen well short. The target of having 25 per cent of the Year 12 student population complete one of the fourteen designated priority languages was emphatically not achieved by 2000. The Australian Language and Literacy Council's *Language teachers: The pivot of policy* (1996a) suggests compelling evidence as to why this has occurred.

The Australian Language and Literacy Council's *Speaking of business* (ALLC 1994), tabled in the Federal Parliament in 1995, attacked many of the instrumentalist claims asserted about cause-effect relationships between languages skills and business/industry success.

After the 1993 federal election the Labor government endorsed the position, driven principally by the Goss Labor government of Queensland and adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), to reprioritise the Asian languages and reduce the numbers for national focus, but vastly to increase national resourcing, to four Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, and Korean.

Prime Minister Howard's decision in 1998 to extend the life of the COAG Asian languages policy for a further three years has provided supplementary funding for those four languages. But many of the questions and accusations in *Language teachers: The pivot of policy* about the quality and supply of sufficient numbers of linguistically proficient and pedagogically adept teachers of Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese, and Korean to enable the COAG goals to be fully implemented in every school education system right across the whole Australian nation, remain unanswered.

From a national, as opposed to any one particular state/territory jurisdiction's perspective, too little regard seems to have been had for the ALLP's insistence upon the need for significant *proficiency* in language use, with respect both to teaching and learning, and effective *assessment* of both teacher and learner proficiency in the use of the language.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and literacy

I do not know how successfully Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages have been maintained and developed under the third goal of the ALLP. One suspects, as in so much public policy and its implementation, that the results are more likely to have been depressing than optimistic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Mandatory sentencing legislation and its enforcement in the Northern Territory, for example, is but the latest demonstration of the ways in which our Indigenous Australians continue to suffer injustice, poverty and alienation in this country. There is little evidence of any significant rise in levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literacy in English. National figures on the literacy in English of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schoolchildren revealed by the NSELS were depressing, even allowing for the methodological problems associated with that part of the ACER's (Australian Council for Educational Research) survey.

Language and literacy services, research and awareness

The Australian Language and Literacy Council was quickly sacked by Dr Kemp soon after the Coalition government was elected in 1996. Technically, the National Board and all its Councils did not experience parliamentary execution until a bill passed the Senate in March 2000. The kind of future faced by the former National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (subsequently renamed Language Australia) is somewhat unclear. There is no longer an Asia in Australia Council.

Some remnants remain, however, from the fourth goal of the ALLP. The Commonwealth government has just launched a new adult literacy television series. The Style Council has just won a reprieve from extinction with AusInfo stepping into the breach left by the loss of Language Australia funding.

Conclusion

It is for others to judge how successful the formulation of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* may or may not have been. But looking back nearly a decade later on a pretty turbulent, usually exciting, sometimes disappointing, but always engaging period, a few things can be said.

The degree of mutual respect and trust that characterised the relationships between the senior officers within DEET's Language and Literacy Section and the Minister's office staff across 1990–1991 meant that many of the problems and tensions written about and observable in other department/ministerial office relationships in Westminster-style democracies, rarely came into play in the construction of the ALLP. I refer to such problems and tensions sprouting from contradictory intellectual synergies, distrust (characterised in its most extreme manifestations by the 'bloody Ministers come and go' bureaucratic syndrome on the one hand and the 'you can't trust the bloody department' ministerial office mantra on the other), and even from personal and professional jealousy.

As a keen observer of the history and realpolitik of governance in both Australian and international contexts, one becomes aware of policy construction processes where such mutually trusted synergies are not highly valued and celebrated. Where the *centripetal* forces of internal bureaucratic malaise, personal empire-building and territoriality overwhelm what should be the *centrifugal* forces of commitment to the construction and implementation of policies that would transform society for the better.

Naturally, the ALLP would not have completely satisfied everyone within all of the academic and professional language and literacy communities in this country. There were some wins and some losses depending on one's particular 'insider' or 'outsider' perspective. But democracy, as Winston Churchill once observed, is the 'least worst' form of governance we have. I think it is fair to say, though, that the ALLP was to be pivotal in highlighting and championing the central role that ought to be played by language and literacy policy in the education, employment and training profile of this nation, and in assuring the then Commonwealth government's commitment to the most substantially funded plethora of language and literacy programs since Federation.

Acknowledgment

I wish to thank Anna Kamarul, Noel Simpson, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins and Louise Watson, all of whom kindly agreed to read a penultimate draft of this chapter and to pass on their comments on the manuscript as participants in these events of nearly a decade ago. Their scrutiny has enhanced the final product and enabled me to fill in some gaps and to amend some matters of detail.

Notes

1 I have been scrupulous to abide by the Westminster convention, unlike the practice deployed in Dr Neal Blewett's very recent *A cabinet diary* (1999), of not referring publicly to any cabinet paper or any record of cabinet discussions from the period under review, 1990–1991. Also, unlike Dr Blewett, I have not revealed the contents of private conversations with public servants.

2 At no stage in my six years in Canberra was I technically a Commonwealth public servant. I was a Consultant Adviser to Minister Dawkins and, subsequently, a Consultant Special Adviser to the Australian Language and Literacy Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training.

3 Louise (now Dr Watson) is now a Research Fellow at the University of Canberra.

3 Politics, activism and processes of policy production: Adult literacy in Australia

Rosie Wickert

> We are all partial authors of the current 'truths' of our practice. (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 59)

Introduction

Ways of representing reality in policy are necessarily bound up with agenda setting and matters of inclusion and exclusion. In large part, this 'politics of discourse' is what engages the energy of policy activists. The Australian language and literacy policy, historically located in a time of major restructuring of federal vocational education and training policy, was inevitably caught up in the questions of truth and power that were driving these reforms. As adult literacy policy and provision became subject to the disciplining effects of public sector management reform, for many involved in adult literacy in various ways, the experience of achieving a public policy commitment seemed, paradoxically, to trigger the dismantling of what they had known as adult literacy in Australia. As an activist deeply engaged in and affected by this policy episode, I have since sought to better understand the politics and processes of policy production with the aim of engaging more effectively in influencing change.

This chapter explores the uneven development of adult literacy in Australia with an eye to the place of 'policy activists' within it.[1] Following an account of Australian adult literacy policy development, a brief exploration of some reactions to the impact of this policy attention provides some ground for a deeper analysis of matters of policy analysis and intervention.

This, then, is not a critique of the texts of adult literacy policy and how they construct the literacy 'problem', nor is it a reconstruction of the production of adult literacy policy, although these cannot be ignored. The intention is to go beyond 'mere commentary and critique' and, in response to Stephen Ball's challenge, to ask 'critical theoretical questions rather than problem solving ones' (Ball 1993: 16). The chapter is also intended to 'enter into a more politically astute relationship with [postmodernism]' (Kenway 1995a: 38). Kenway talks of 'explicating the political', of being interested 'in the mechanics *and the politics* of subjectivity and signification' (p 42), whilst 'holding onto normative grounds' and maintaining an orientation to 'the importance of being practical' (p 43). This argument suggests that an analysis of the processes of the production of policy development, both as a realist documentary tale and via a poststructuralist analysis of the accounts of those involved, may enable productive ways of 'reading' policy and its effects, in order to continue to *have* an effect — in that practical sense. In part, adult literacy policy is what it is because of how the possibilities for play around its conception were perceived and understood. But it is also how it is because of the 'play' of the constitutive effects of its discursive and meta-discursive environments. Thus adult literacy policy production not only speaks to the substantive area of policy concern, but also for a set of questions about how to think about the policy process and how to be situated within it.

Adult literacy, in this chapter, refers to those publicly funded programs that have an adult literacy component. They may be designated adult literacy classes in community, college or work settings. They may be employment assistance programs or vocational training programs which have literacy aspects incorporated in them. They may be delivered to individuals or groups by paid teachers or volunteers, by literacy experts working alone, or in conjunction with vocational teachers or industry trainers. Most adult literacy provision is funded by the Commonwealth government in Australia, so this will be the focus of the analysis below. However, much that follows applies increasingly to state and territory funded provision.

Activism can occur in a number of different ways, and through different types of intervention from within and outside state agencies — insider and outsider activists respectively. Activism is above all oriented to change: 'actively engaged in seeking to reshape the basic assumptions of government policy' (Brennan 1999: 89). In the account of the development of adult literacy policy and provision that follows, I make particular note of relationships between adult literacy policy production and the work of literacy activists in Australia.

Adult literacy and policy in Australia — telling a realist tale

There is now considerable awareness about adult literacy throughout the industrial world due, in large part, to the policy attention of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the associated international adult literacy survey (IALS) involving, to date, over a dozen member OECD countries including Australia (ABS 1997a). The emerging policy priorities of the OECD provide a context, though not sufficient, for an explanation of the growth of adult literacy provision in member countries of the OECD, including Australia. Within these nations there is also a shared history of activism, both 'on the ground' and in attempting to influence policy development. (See for example, Caunter 1990; Quigley 1991; Hamilton 1992; Hautecoeur 1996; Street 1997.) In Australia, this activism has largely been channelled through the activities of interest groups such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL).

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy was formed in 1977, stimulated in part by literacy campaigns in the United Kingdom and United States of America, as well as by the lack of government interest in the (then largely volunteer) development of adult literacy provision which had begun in Australia in the late 1960s. ACAL was politically active from the start and soon achieved policy statements from each of the four major political parties. When the Australian Labor Party took office in 1983, a national adult literacy campaign was part of its policy platform. Though this recommendation was not adopted, this first naming of adult literacy as a legitimate focus of policy attention was an important strategic gain. In the same period, a powerful standing political lobby, the Professional Language Associations for a National Language Policy (PLANLangPol) agreed to include English among its other language interests. This was the start of an important policy and professional association between languages and literacy activists.

A consideration of the extent of adult literacy in English and the 'need for remedial programs' was included in the terms of reference of the Senate inquiry that was eventually established in 1982. The resultant report *A national language policy* (SSCEA 1984) importantly accepted the principle of 'competence in English' as one of the four guiding principles for any national policy on languages, and urged the Commonwealth government to provide funds for adult literacy. However, although implemented, the $2m recommended specifically for adult literacy provision nationally, was eventually distributed more broadly among disadvantaged groups, leaving a mere $0.5m for adult literacy. This disappointing outcome meant that only 15 years ago there was still no significant policy attention paid to adult literacy at any level of government in Australia, leaving it 'isolated and marginalised' with largely unqualified practitioners, 'limited' infrastructure and a 'virtually non-existent' research base (Elwell-Gavins 1994).

However, the coalition of language interests continued its push for a national languages policy and, because of the acceptance of the principle of 'English competence for all', continued to provide a legitimate space for adult literacy claims. The *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) was the culmination of these efforts and succeeded in securing the first specific national policy commitment for adult literacy: a two-year Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC) with funds of $1.966m for each year. Most of this went to the states and territories but, importantly, $250,000 was kept for projects of national strategic significance. The advice of the ACAL Executive was crucial in the choice and the framing of many of the projects that resulted. These included the first national survey of adult literacy (Wickert 1989), a study of the attitudes and opinions of unions and employers to the issue of literacy in the workplace (Long 1989) and an evaluation of literacy and numeracy in labour market programs (Cumming & Morris 1991). Each of these reports was to have a profound impact on policy development in the field.

However, in spite of the reported success of the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (Ernst & Young 1990), and the efforts of ACAL and other adult literacy advocates within government departments to name and secure adult literacy as an issue of economic as well as social importance, the future funding of adult literacy provision was in doubt as the two-year program drew to an end. Serious consideration was being given to a proposal to hand over adult literacy funding to the Commonwealth Employment Service for tendering — a move that would not only exclude all but the unemployed from Commonwealth funded assistance, but would profoundly alter the educational focus of literacy provision in Australia (as, indeed, has occurred post-1996). So, although the achievement of approximately $3m of new funding since 1987 was considered a major success by ACAL, it hardly counted in almost any other context. Thus it was perhaps not surprising that Australia even seriously considered whether it was worth participating in the International Literacy Year of 1990. Yet by the time 1990 ended, adult literacy provision had come to be 'seen by government, business, industry and union leaders to have a "centre stage" role in meeting the needs of the national economy' (Black 1995: 27).

How did this happen? One explanation lies in the deliberate strategies adopted by literacy activists in the late 1980s to reposition adult literacy as an economic and thus a mainstream issue, in addition to its social justice dimensions. Early reports about the 'illiteracy problem' tended to be constructed around the social and personal cost to the individual and were articulated within human rights frames. Such reports were also largely initiated and managed by adult literacy activists and, although influential in raising awareness, failed to achieve much financial commitment. By the late 1980s it was clear that campaigning for literacy as a rights or social justice issue was not going to be effective and this led to activists, including myself, engaging in a revised agenda-setting process designed to hook adult literacy to the OECD-generated concerns about skill formation in Australia. The three projects named above are significant examples of these efforts. In addition to providing policy-oriented data, the reports were written with insiders' knowledge of what fellow advocates could use in their lobbying and policy activism. *No single measure* (Wickert 1989), in particular, was cited widely across a range of contexts and acknowledged as a key resource in the achievement of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991).

A second explanation for the rise of adult literacy in Australia as a policy issue is linked to the influence of the OECD. Clearly the OECD's concern about the skill levels of industrialised nations would have begun to filter onto the desks of senior bureaucrats and politicians before 1990. In Australia, one response to this was to establish a number of parliamentary and departmental inquiries. By the late 1990s the findings of these inquiries were to provide a significant boost to the efforts of adult literacy activists. For example, Ivan Deveson, Chair of an independent committee to investigate options for strengthening training, stated ominously in the foreword of his report that Australia was 'arguably, at the "back of the pack" in skill formation relative to other OECD countries', and he highlighted a 'literacy and numeracy gap' as a major barrier to improving Australia's skill base (Training Costs Review Committee 1990: v). Although initially met with some scepticism, these kinds of findings were to gather momentum during the ensuing months, contributing significantly to the policy outcomes in 1991.

Finally, there are those accidents of timing that serendipitously enable certain events to happen and certain things to be thought at particular times. Minister John Dawkins's (Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training 1987–1991) close engagement with the policy agendas of the OECD was arguably an important sine qua non condition for how adult literacy got caught up with his visions for training reform (Dawkins 1991b). The Prices and Incomes Accord between the Hawke government and the union movement, and the equity concerns of the Australian Council of Trade Unions in relation to industry restructuring, added a further significant voice to which adult literacy activists could add their own, and were indeed invited to do so. The effects of the coincidence of International Literacy Year (ILY) with Dawkins's reform agenda cannot be underestimated. For example, without the activities of ACAL and other bodies such as the ACTU to connect adult literacy findings to the early stages of mobilising the workplace reform agenda, it is very unlikely that the key position of leading Australia's response to ILY would have gone to an *adult* literacy activist, or that the composition of the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year would have been so oriented to adult literacy policy issues.

So it was in complex ways, as Lo Bianco (1997a: 5) notes, that:

> ...the efforts of activists...helped transform both official understandings and deep-seated commitments of prominent government ministers from a 'literacy' as a welfarist preoccupation for small numbers of individual Australians, or a purely social equity issue for some groups among the disadvantaged, or a distanced problem more relevant to aid donors — into a central matter of concern for developed and rapidly post-industrialising economies.

In the event, the combined pressures of International Literacy Year and the opportunities this offered for influencing policy development, fear of a recessionary crisis and the rapidly developing rhetoric of workplace and training reform resulted in a further two-year funding commitment for adult literacy and the promise of a policy. A Green Paper was published in late 1990, followed in 1991 by the adoption of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP). The ALLP promised a substantial increase in funding for adult literacy over a period of a further three years. Although there is some dispute about how much of these funds were 'new', in the sense that the ALLP combined a number of existing programs, Table 3.1, using approximate figures, gives a rough idea of the scale of the increase in Commonwealth funds for adult literacy programs since 1990.[2]

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Table 3.1 Increase in Commonwealth funds in adult literacy programs 1990–2000 (Table constructed from various sources and personal communications.)

Program	1990–91	1994–95	1996–99	2000
TAFE/community	$4.5m	$7.0m	$7.0m	$7.0m
Literacy in SkillShare	$1.0m	$3.0m	—	—
Literacy in labour market programs/employment assistance	$3.5m	$27.0m	$117.0m (includes ESL)	$33.8 (literacy/numeracy only)
Research and development	$1.0m	$1.6m	$2.0m	$2.0m
Literacy in the workplace	—	$7.6m	$12.0m	$12.0m

The introduction of these 'new' programs had a number of important consequences, not least of which were the opportunities they provided for literacy activists to gain strategic positions within government agencies and advisory bodies. Years of neglect and ignorance of this issue by state and territory governments, followed by the sudden influx of 'tagged' funds, necessitated the employment of 'experts' to assist in the implementation of the national adult literacy policy initiatives. This enabled the states and territories to strengthen their bids for continued Commonwealth funding in this area. Ironically, given the later impact of tendering, the moves to tendering consolidated the positions of those with the kind of knowledge that could strengthen tender bids.

Nationally, a joint Commonwealth/state and territory taskforce was established under the aegis of the Ministers for Education and Employment and Training. At least two thirds of the membership of this taskforce were current or recent members of the Executive of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy. Resulting from ACAL's work was the important and policy-consolidating *National collaborative adult English language and literacy strategy* (Ministers for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1993). Associated with this strategy were a number of significant policy-related research and development projects. Notable amongst these was the development of nationally consistent approaches to competency-based curriculum and assessment, one intention of which was to anchor adult literacy ever more firmly within the vocational education and training (VET) reform agenda.

Accounts of this strategic work note an urgency linked to two issues (Gilding 1995, 1996). One is the ever-hastening privatisation of those areas of adult education and training where low literacy is likely to be a problem, along with a casualisation and deprofessionalisation of the field that is likely to accompany such a process. The other is an irony long associated with advocacy in relation to equity-type concerns. Experienced activists in other fields have advised adult literacy advocates over the years that successful policy outcomes are achieved through a writing of their concerns into mainstream policy directions. As indicated above, this is what was happening within adult literacy, specifically a strengthening of the place of literacy and numeracy integrated in vocational education and training and the development of industry competency standards. This has largely been possible because of a continuing equity dimension to the Australian National Training Authority's priorities. The irony is that successful integration renders the 'cause' less visible and thus less under the gaze of the watchful literacy activist. This has implications for the nature of activism, an issue which I explore in more detail later in the chapter.

Clearly, far-reaching changes have occurred to the policy context of the provision of adult literacy since the adoption of the ALLP, many of which are explored in detail in other chapters of this book. These include the move to tendered programs as indicated above, along with no guarantee of continued 'tagged' funding at a national level. It is now clear that, as McKenna (1997) predicted, funding for adult literacy programs is increasingly tightly managed and competitive or else is incorporated within other broader VET reform initiatives. Provision for the unemployed is more individualised and mediated through employment brokers who, with employers, are becoming the main purchasers of 'adult literacy services'. Funding is increasingly performance-based, with limited resources for so-called 'infrastructure' apportioned to successful contractors. Although these directions were set by the previous federal government, intensified fragmentation, along with much stricter control of entitlement through the operations of the principle of 'mutual obligation', intensify the risks to the field. For example, they appear to be hastening a return to a deprofessionalised and marginalised adult literacy. The policy strategy of mainstream integration, employed by activists within state and territory agencies and government policy advisory bodies, may have secured the recognition of language and literacy as a key underpinning competence of VET reform, but there is a growing realisation that a 'separate notion of adult literacy and numeracy provision with infrastructure support can no longer be assured' (McKenna 1997: 21).

These developments have implications far beyond the obvious managerial ones. What they do is to reconstitute the frameworks within which sits the potential for influencing the formulation and implementation of policy. Turning publicly funded education over to the market changes the nature of political relationships. As Yeatman notes (1990: 173), not only does the 'commodification of claims enable the state to control and ration their proliferation' by taking them out of the political arena, it also 'has the effect of privatising them which in turn has the effect of restricting the scope of the politics of discourse'. This of course has implications for policy activism and intervention and, in part, explains the urgency felt by those insider activists working within state and territory agencies who were seeking opportunities to strengthen adult literacy's place in mainstream VET policy. As suggested above, the opportunities for, and characteristics of, policy intervention are being reconstituted as the administrative and competitive state refashions itself to be increasingly beyond or outside the familiar opportunities for influence. A consideration of these issues requires some interrogation of the policy process and how it works. One way into such an exploration is via the ways that policy developments are 'read' and how these interpretations reflect back particular views of policy, how it works and how it can be influenced.

Reading the policy effects — reactions from the field

As explained above, the activities of adult literacy activists, including myself, during the latter half of the late 1980s were heavily focused on achieving a national policy commitment for adult literacy. The outcome was generally welcomed within adult literacy circles. There was a sense that 'our time had come'. Indeed, the funds that initially flowed from the ALLP had a positive impact on the field. Adult literacy experienced rapid growth across a range of types of provision. Opportunities for professional development of teachers expanded, resulting in a significant professionalising of the field. There was an explosion of research and development activity, much of it, although not all, policy-related research linked to the implementation strategy of the ALLP. As mentioned earlier, literacy experts and activists gained access to key policy advisory and implementation bodies.

Reactions to the various effects of the policy changes on the field of adult literacy are mixed. Irrespective of the substance or validity of these varied reactions, they are important in the ways that they provide ways of 'reading' how policy driven changes are themselves 'read'. In this sense they provide a touchstone for the closer analysis of policy work that follows.

According to Lo Bianco, author of the 1987 *National Policy on Languages*, the mood is 'pessimistic'. 'Perversely to some extent, because of these policies', he notes, 'adult ESL [English as a second language] and adult literacy face a crisis' (Lo Bianco 1997a: 1). Significantly, it appears that the claims of strategic success made by a number of insider activists (Gilding 1995, 1996; Coates 1996) are not necessarily shared by others in the field. Many agree with Lo Bianco (1997a: 6) that, in spite of the successes of the ALLP, some years after its adoption and implementation, provision:

> ...although greater, is fragmented and insecure, the workforce has become increasingly casualised, professional networks have been damaged by competitive tendering processes, infrastructure support has dematerialised, working conditions have worsened, curriculum has been 'colonised' by competency-based approaches. In the eyes of many, adult literacy has come to be 'sublimated' to a centralised, controlling, assessing, monitoring, information-demanding mechanism.

The ALLP is a powerful exemplification of the unforeseen effects of a policy commitment during periods of rapid change, when the 'policy' drives changes that appear to be far beyond those indicated by the informing policy text itself. Until its adoption, adult literacy providers were used to the essentially untied and relatively open ended Commonwealth funding against which there were no performance requirements and little monitoring of activity except against broad guidelines. As noted earlier, for many, the experience of 'having a policy' seemed to trigger the dismantling of what they had known as adult literacy in Australia, as the newly visible adult literacy became subject to the dominant vocationalist discourses and the disciplining effects of the 'new public management'. What then were the expectations of policy activists in adult literacy for these kinds of effects, and what kinds of conception of policy and the policy process did they hold?

Explanations put forward for this alleged policy 'failure' seem to fall into four categories. The first is the impact of the 'metapolicy' (Yeatman 1990), of economic restructuring. Economic rationalism and corporate managerialism elevated the goals of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as the prime value of public sector management. In an era of a multiplicity of claims on the public purse, the 'steering mechanism' (Pusey 1991: 19) of market-oriented approaches are applied to the complexities of resource management. The argument rehearsed is that this has had the dual effect of corralling adult literacy to the service of economic restructuring whilst subjecting its providers to the processes of tendering for funds. The problem for the field is not so much that these are destructive practices in themselves, to be opposed as a matter of principle; it is that the assumptions of economy, efficiency and effectiveness that led to these hugely disruptive practices, remain untested (Boston 1996).

A second thread of explanation for the 'colonisation of adult literacy to ends which the students and professionals in the field contest' (Lo Bianco 1997a: 3) is the proposition that adult literacy, as 'a set of ideologically driven practices', may not be 'tractable' to the discursively powerful rationalist preoccupations of bureaucratic decision-making processes and that, in a sense, adult literacy has been 'disciplined' to become amenable to these. Lo Bianco (1997b) further suggests that the apparent disjunction between the 'ideology and interests' of government intervention and those of adult literacy practitioners, makes the prospect of a new policy settlement difficult without greater concession from practitioners to bureaucratic requirements, and from bureaucrats to the practitioners' needs. This is a divide which some appear to see as unbreachable.

A third theme is a view that literacy activists, who entered the public service on the strength of their knowledge of and commitment to the field, were coopted and compromised by the state and have become 'traitors to the cause', instrumental in the delivery of adult literacy to the technologies of control that have come to dominate the field from the mid-1990s. Blackmore (1995: 297) has noted how the 'position of individuals who seemed to represent particular social movements became increasingly uncomfortable during the eight years of the Hawke Labor government' as they 'sought to maintain the rhetoric of democratisation while increasingly adopting an economistic approach to administration through the introduction of corporate management'. An increasingly cynical reception of the efforts of activists working at senior levels within bureaucracies, as well as those involved in ongoing analysis for policy development, suggests this applies also to adult literacy. Practitioners, particularly, find it hard to support these efforts as their own working conditions worsen, the apparent colonising of adult literacy work by economistic discourses increases, and the strategies being developed to attempt to secure a sustainable policy future for adult literacy become increasingly 'framed and constrained by a discourse of economic rationalism and the practice of corporate management' (Blackmore 1995: 298).

Finally, there is a view that the naivety and lack of experience of policy activists in the field about how to intervene effectively in the policy process may have contributed to its supposed appropriation. This is a view expressed largely by these activists themselves through interviews (Wickert & Williams 2000). The proffering of their lack of 'policy literacy', in the sense of being able to 'read' how broader policy agendas get written into everyday practice, stimulates questions about the kinds of assumptions that were held by these policy actors about policy and the policy process; their constitution as policy activists; how beliefs about what a policy commitment might deliver are constructed; their relationships with the field (or movement) on whose behalf they were acting and how they read the broader policy agendas of the Dawkins/Keating era.

None of the kinds of responses to recent adult literacy policy developments outlined above is sufficient for the purpose to which they are put. Their significance, for their discussion in this paper, is how they can be read against differing constructs of policy processes. Linked together (and without intending to homogenise them), they appear to support a view of the enactment of policy that is informed by a state-centric, top down, linear model of the policy process. A dominant 'policy-as-product' perspective sets up the binaries of success/failure, promise/threat and so on, which inflect these interpretations. At the time of the development of the ALLP, this is what 'having a policy' seemed to mean to the actors involved. The energy of the activists, enmeshed in the maelstrom of the Green and White Paper processes, was focused on getting a decision — on the achievement of a policy commitment embodied in text. At this time, for these people, myself among them, this is what policy was, not a temporary settlement, not 'a punctuation mark within the flow' (Considine 1994: 4). The 'procedural display' seemingly expected of policy activists around policy formation constituted them in particular kinds of ways around a notion of policy as a particular kind of product, as 'the' desired outcome. For these activists, caught up in the promise of policy, it *was* a 'once in a lifetime chance' (Gilding 1996: 1).

What was going on then, that the careful, solution-oriented, empirically-driven analyses were less powerful as a force for change in the field than the dominant managerialist meta-discourses driving education and training reform? Turning to what was for me a new field of study, educational policy analysis, I discovered an active debate about just these kinds of dilemmas, stimulated in large part by Stephen Ball's challenges to adherents of dominant policy analysis paradigms to be more theoretically adventurous.

Debates and new directions in education policy analysis

Education policy literature has been criticised in recent years from a range of perspectives. Many commentators have noted that the policy process is still widely conceptualised as linear and rationalist and that the work of policy development is viewed largely as the application of a technocratic problem-solving process. This 'received' or 'instrumental', linear, top-down view of policy-making represents policy-making as a technicist, rational process. It separates the activities of policy formation and policy implementation; the activities of policy and administration, and casts implementation as a 'faithful execution' of the decision.

The critique of a rationalist view of policy production is not only directed to conservative analyses of policy. Commentators have also noted the limitations of such perspectives in more radical accounts. Dale (1992), for example, has been critical of the blinkeredness of the 'Left' for what he calls its 'doomsday' scenario of policy activity and analysis, which also assumes a rationalist 'fidelity' model of policy implementation and which, he suggests, diverts attention from seeking the possibilities for intervention and action inherent in the uncertainties of implementation. However, the managerialisation of public policy activity and the globalisation of policy direction have increasingly displaced the traditional politics of democratic government. Melucci (1988: 251) says:

> In contemporary systems the available spaces for reaching agreements are limited and temporary. They have to be redefined continually and rapidly because the differences change, the conflicts shift, the agreements cease to satisfy and new forms of domination are constantly emerging.

Within this complexity, '[p]olitical relationships', Melucci suggests, 'have never been so important' (p 251). The scarcity of adequate models of analysis for exploring the dynamics of the complex 'political relationships' of post-modernity renders this seemingly simple statement central to questions of intervention.

Discourses of opposition and resistance construct binary oppositions as a tactic, what Lather (1991: 24) berates as Marxism's transformations of 'difference into dichotomous oppositions...multiplicities and plurality into a single oppositional norm'. Binary oppositions are regularly, and unhelpfully, drawn between, for example, bureaucrat/citizen, policy-maker/practitioner and so on. The work to which such binary oppositions is put makes invisible the possibilities and potentialities for other kinds of political relationships than the one signified by the operation of the binary in its privileging of one term over another. For example, the stereotypical construct of a bureaucrat serves to privilege counter positions as well as homogenises bureaucrats in such a way that their gender, histories, political affiliations, race and class are invisible. Further, the ways in which these kinds of subjectivities intersect with that of bureaucrat are disallowed. Scheurich (1995) suggests we must go beyond the dominance/resistance binary, so as to recognise that much of living occurs outside its confines. 'There is more to living', he says, 'than can be circumscribed by the membership defined its activities and its operation. Numbers of paid workers in the field were relatively low and work was often part-time. This was also reflected in the configuration and operation of WAALC. By comparison, the Western Australian teachers of English to speakers of other languages formed a strong and vibrant group, WATESOL. English as a second language (ESL) was a research preoccupation of numbers of university academics and the field was represented in the education faculties in each local university during the 1980s. There was no particular separation of client groups and so primary, secondary and technical education practitioners were members of one association.

While WAALC did provide a networking service and updated its members on teaching methodology and resources, the organisation differed from teachers' professional associations in that it lacked a critical mass of professionals and input from university academics. Understandably, little critique or research of the field was undertaken by the membership or under the auspice of any local university.

1990, the International Literacy Year, marked a significant change to the pace, size and nature of activities undertaken within the adult literacy industry for a brief number of years. Over that period, WAALC adopted some new roles and responsibilities as the volume of adult literacy classes increased. The final section of the chapter addresses the implications and consequences of these shifts.

Adult migrant education

By contrast, adult English language provision for new arrivals to Australia was well organised and occupied a more defined role in federal government service provision. The opportunity to take advantage of English language and literacy classes has been an important service to Australian migrants from the 1950s through to present times. While over half a century the level of service available to Australia's newcomers has dropped, the principle of providing the service has remained in place. Provision of English classes for new arrivals has been, and remains, a federally funded and coordinated responsibility. Not surprisingly, the services continued to operate in a relatively uniform manner in each state. Funded and monitored directly from Canberra, in a historical sense, the Adult Migrant Education Programs have been well resourced in comparison with similar provision for long-term, Australian residents with low levels of skills in reading and writing. Over time, the funding process and accountabilities for migrant education programs have become extremely sophisticated.

While adult migrant education was well established in the adult literacy field, Knight (1990: 49) referring to the Victorian context, argues that the policies of the Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES), as the largest provider, significantly impacted on the wider adult literacy field and 'affected...the stances taken by the other players in the field'. It is doubtful if this was the case in Western Australia where, as noted elsewhere in Australia, there were perceptible differences in theory, pedagogy and curriculum between ESL and adult literacy provision (see for example Burns 1992).

In a comparison of the two fields Burns (1992: 9) concluded that where adult ESL has traditionally drawn on theories of language (initially structural and latterly communicative functional perspectives), adult literacy has been informed by theories of literacy which have moved from psycholinguistic approaches to those concerning the relevance of context and the socially constructed nature of literacy. More contested in the Australian context, Burns argued, has been the debate between a focus on the psycholinguistically derived model regarded as the 'whole language' approach to language and literacy instruction as opposed to one derived from functional linguistics – a 'genre-based' approach with an acknowledgment of the interrelationship between text and context. Both fields, according to Burns, have endorsed learner-centred models of practice. However, AMES has focused on cross-cultural competence and spoken language and recognition of similarity of needs in program planning. Adult literacy, on the other hand, with relatively smaller classes and students with generally higher English entry levels, she argues, has been in a better position to employ individualisation and negotiation and affective aspects of personal growth in curriculum and instruction.

However, somewhat in contrast to Burns (1992), Hammond and Wickert (1993: 28) reporting on the joint Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA) and Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) report *The pedagogical relations between adult ESL and adult literacy* concluded that the two fields had:

> ...similar understandings of the parameters of literacy education; they have similar definitions of literacy and draw on similar theories of language, literacy and learning. They have similar views on what constitutes good practice in literacy education. They also have similar views on what constitutes difference between the two fields.

Differences and resultant tensions between the fields that Hammond and Wickert identified concerned 'the professional concerns of educators and the economic imperatives driving many...policy decisions' (1993: 29). Key data sources for these conclusions were consultations with 'key personnel' in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland and forums organised at national and state conferences.

Our observations from Western Australia suggest that more pervasive and fundamental differences than those identified in the Hammond and Wickert joint report did operate in Western Australia and that, as Knight (1990) suggests, adult literacy and adult ESL have historically drawn on different paradigms. The picture painted by Burns (1992) seems to more accurately reflect the local situation. Certainly adult ESL has been underpinned by an assimilationist ideology and, as Knight (1990: 51) suggests, the 1988 Fitzgerald inquiry and changes in Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) policy in the early 1990s, while within the rubric of 'the Government's *multicultural* package' (our emphasis), looked more like 'post-war assimilationist ideologies than multiculturalism'.

While the AMEP was well established in the adult literacy field throughout

Australia, provision for other special interest groups such as adult Aboriginal Australians and English speaking Australians did not really become firmly established until the late 1970s when the Commonwealth government entered as a major player in education and Aboriginal affairs.

Adult Aboriginal literacy

Under the prevailing post-war assimilation policy, the Education Department of Western Australia established an Adult Aboriginal Education (AAE) section in 1964 in what was then the Technical Education Division. The section aimed to develop Western living skills and in particular English literacy for Aboriginal people living in settled as well as remote Western Australia (George 1980: 444). By 1980, AAE employed six full-time staff and administered 56 technical education centres for Aboriginal communities including the remote Western Desert communities such as Jigalong and Warburton (George 1980: 445). In addition, within the General Studies departments of metropolitan and regional technical colleges, AAE enclaves focused on basic literacy and numeracy in an effort to improve the access and transfer of adult Aboriginal students into mainstream technical courses.

While it was almost a decade later that emphasis on access to further education was recognised in a name change from AAE to Aboriginal Access, throughout the 1970s and 1980s considerable resources were devoted to literacy provision including an ambitious program publishing reading materials, some of which were bilingual. By 1979, for example, 100 titles had been published including literacy materials to accompany driver training, electoral education and community administration and works such as *The girl who nearly drowned. Manga yurrantinya* (nd) and *The thirsty woman. Marnin pa lurrujarti yani* (nd), both in English and Walmatjari. While the majority of the titles published were functional, and at times somewhat paternalistic and patronising, the decision to devote resources to the preparation and publication of bilingual material and topics concerning classical Aboriginal culture was avant-garde at this time.

In a chapter in the sesquicentennial publication *Aborigines of the west: Their past and present* (Berndt & Berndt 1980), the then head of AAE, Mike George, endorsed anthropologist Colin Tatz's entreaty to view adult Aboriginal literacy education neither as an extension of school nor involving the adaptation of existing syllabuses. Rather, he argued, adult Aboriginal literacy should be regarded as 'a discipline in itself' thereby 'requiring research, experiment and the formulation of special techniques' (Tatz 1968 cited in George 1980: 444).[1]

Throughout the period, the notion that literacy was a powerful tool prevailed, initially seen as a tool for assimilation and later as a requisite skill for self-management. While there was a recognition that Aboriginal learning styles, Indigenous instruction and interests and indeed reasons for being in adult literacy instructional settings may differ from those of other groups, and the rhetoric that difference did not imply deficit was drawn on, this was not widely translated into practice. Similarly, there was never any serious attempt to engage with the politics of literacy in this context (cf Rhydwen 1996). Neither was consideration given to other literacies employed by Indigenous Australians (see for example Biddle 1996). While there was a recognition that English was a second language and even a second dialect for many, in effect, the silence on the role of Kriol and Aboriginal English continued. The general explanatory framework in practice was that the school system had failed Aboriginal Australians in English language and literacy acquisition in both remote and settled Australia and that adult Aboriginal literacy provision offered a second chance employing content that was deemed to be relevant to adult lives (for example driver education, negotiating with the local service station, organising a birthday party).

With increasing contraction of federal funding and local moves to mainstream special interest activities and devolve hitherto centrally administered instrumental functions to Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges and in response to reports such as the *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force* (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force 1988: 29ff), by the late 1980s the Aboriginal Access branch had undergone Indigenisation and Aboriginal people were occupying key decision-making roles. By the 1990s the branch was looking to better align its literacy and numeracy provision with other entry level curricula.

AAE, and later Aboriginal Access, was represented on adult literacy coordinating committees and came together for administrative decision-making with other equity units within an equity portfolio in the technical education sector in Western Australia. For all intents and purposes Aboriginal Access, with its own bucket of funding, adult migrant education and adult literacy agencies, all of which primarily focused on adult language and literacy, operated strategically and instrumentally separately throughout the 1980s and 1990s with a limited interchange of personnel, ideas or resources.

By the close of the 1980s there was an extensive range of Western Australian state-funded adult literacy subjects available in technical and regional colleges and a statewide volunteer tutoring service with nearly 30 branches. A mix of state and federal funding sources fuelled the activities. The International Literacy Year in 1990 and the adoption of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) in 1991 heralded the entry of the Commonwealth as a major player in the state scene.

The impact of national policy and associated funding 1991–1993

Following Federal Parliament's formal endorsement of the ALLP (DEET 1991) the Commonwealth government provided substantial additional funding to state governments under a triennial arrangement to foster growth in literacy services to adults. In Western Australia, the Adult Literacy Services Bureau (ALSB), part of the Department of Vocational Education and Training, was the state government instrumentality responsible for the allocation of this funding. Throughout the 1980s the agency had primarily focused on the management of community literacy services, principally the Volunteer Tutor Scheme, but began in the early 1990s to develop a management role for labour market programs, national projects, professional development, and policy development and implementation. These new roles were made possible because of the availability of targeted literacy funding.

In addition to augmenting funds to states, the Commonwealth government greatly increased service provision for language and literacy through new and existing labour market programs. The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program (incorporating the long established English in the Workplace program managed by DILGEA) brought an injection of funds for language and literacy programs for workers which for the first time included those from an English speaking background. The Special Intervention Program (SIP) which targeted job seekers with literacy and language needs was also introduced. Funds for these programs were made available through competitive processes and in Western Australia, the Adult Literacy Services Bureau successfully tendered to provide these services. Thus, within a year, the Bureau was accessing funding for service delivery that trebled its budget and, while retaining responsibility for the Volunteer Tutor Scheme, developed an expanded program management role in the labour market environment.

During the early 1990s, owing to the influx of funding, accountability systems which had been developed over nearly 50 years of Australian migrant education provision offered an incentive to develop benchmarking methods for monitoring funds for and outputs from the newly developed sectors for provision of adult literacy. In managing the funding for labour market language and literacy programs directly, the Commonwealth government was in a position to insist on greater accountability measured by gains in student learning. An effort was made to develop a single national tool to measure and report on gains in student learning in adult literacy programs,[2] and the result was that in 1991 literacy providers in the Special Intervention Program adopted the Interim Literacy Course Matrix to report on student progress. In a similar fashion reminiscent of the AMEP, a complex clerical reporting system was used to record skill gains in individual SIP students.

The early 1990s also marked the beginning of two key intersecting public policies. The first was the reform of the vocational educational and training sector, directed at achieving a nationally coherent training system that would be more responsive to industry needs. Characteristic of this reform was the emphasis on key educational competencies as an outcome of all entry level training, national regulation of curriculum, and portability of credentials. It was in response to these reforms in the mid-1990s that the first full-time, accredited literacy course to be delivered in the vocational training sector in Western Australia was introduced.[3]

The second public policy was the introduction of competition policy which heralded increasing openness in the training market. Both initiatives demanded numbers of government monitoring processes to be devised. For example, the language and literacy labour market programs were among the first in the vocational education and training sector to be required to operate in a funding environment where the balance of a provider's payments were based on a client's progress. The Special Intervention Program foreshadowed the case management approach to funding for disadvantaged groups in the community, an approach that was adopted more broadly in the delivery of labour market funding from 1996. The emphasis on accountability in federally funded training provision was one of the key outcomes of national competition policy.

National collaborative mechanisms

In order to further the goals of the ALLP, intergovernmental forums were established. The subgroup for Adult English Language and Literacy reported to the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) through the ALLP taskforce. The subgroup was charged with responsibility for devising a national collaborative plan for adult English language and literacy. On the one hand, the new national policy advisory structures described above were created to bring together two disparate groups of providers while, at the same time, the introduction of funding mechanisms which involved competitive tendering encouraged providers to regard one another as commercial competitors.

At this stage there were few formal mechanisms established in the state to consider overarching language and literacy policy issues.[4] The Adult Literacy Services Bureau, having established itself as a service provider, was therefore competing with the state AMEP service provider and other agencies including Skillshare and some of the universities for Commonwealth labour market funding. It nevertheless retained an important role in providing policy advice in national forums for both language and literacy. This pointed to a potential conflict of interest.

A National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy (NCAELLS) produced by the subgroup was formally endorsed in April 1993. The chief function of the NCAELLS was to provide collaborative mechanisms for planning and reporting on language and literacy provision at the state and territory level and between governments. In many states, including Western Australia, these aspirations could not be sustained in an environment of expanding competition, structural change, decentralising and outsourcing of some activities in the public sector and the far reaching reforms associated with the national training framework.

While specific purpose funding for labour market language and literacy programs and for the language programs delivered to new migrants remained under Commonwealth control, arrangements to establish a new instrumentality to manage the national vocational education and training (VET) reforms were being finalised. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) therefore came into being in 1994.

Literacy and language in VET 1994–1999

1993 was the final year of a considerable input of support via the triennial funding based upon recommendations contained in the ALLP. However, the Commonwealth funding for language and literacy labour market programs continued at the same level of funding that they had previously enjoyed. By mid-1994 a policy sea change had occurred in the state training department and language and literacy labour market programs had been devolved from the Adult Literacy Services Bureau to TAFE and regional colleges. The Bureau's role contracted so that it continued to coordinate the delivery of professional development and manage the implementation of the Certificates in General Education for Adults.

As part of its structural reform, the state training department reshaped funding arrangements for TAFE colleges. The department adopted a purchasing role where it determined the type and amount of training to be delivered across the state by means of a state training plan. The negotiated quantity and type of training was then 'purchased' at a cost per student contact hour which was predetermined, following a schematic costing formula. One effect of the 'purchasing model' was to set benchmarks for a student/teacher ratio. Under this model access and bridging courses were required to maintain higher numbers of students per teaching hour than areas teaching practical skills where risk of injury was taken into consideration within the formula. The Certificates in General Education for Adults became the bridging program of choice to service a range of special interest groups including Aboriginal people, people from a non-English speaking background and people with an intellectual disability.

However, the use of nationally accredited curriculum was re-evaluated and systematically replaced by a skills recognition process. The Australian Recognition Framework shifted the focus of regulation from curriculum to skills recognition. Training providers were required to address new quality assurance standards in order to be certified as registered training organisations: the training market was becoming self-regulated as well as open. The reforms signalled a shift in the management of entry level training. The focus of the previous Commonwealth government on labour market programs was reduced in favour of structured work-based training. In effect this shift meant less direct Commonwealth funding to stand alone literacy and language programs and more emphasis on language, literacy and numeracy as integral aspects of vocational training.

In response to this shift the training department in Western Australia has developed mechanisms within competitive tendering and the funding arrangements with TAFE colleges to deliver literacy support to vocational students who struggle or fail in training. Underpinning the development of literacy services as formal support mechanisms for students undertaking vocational courses is the recognition that not only must literacy learning be contextual, it must be explicit rather than assumed to be acquired by osmosis.

A cornerstone of the Australian Recognition Framework was the development of industry training packages to encapsulate nationally endorsed standards and competencies. The degree to which language, literacy and numeracy were incorporated into training packages varied despite strong support from the Australian National Training Authority to encourage training package developers to incorporate these skills.[5] Unfortunately there has been an assumption in the use of the all-encompassing term 'workplace communication' that underpinning skills of communication would not need to be taught. Given the results of the Australian Bureau of Statistics literacy survey (ABS 1997a, 1997b), it was clear that adequate literacy and numeracy for life's labours were not acquired by all school leavers or members of the workforce.

The focus now for the vocational sector in Western Australia is to ensure that an opportunity is not missed to address the literacy and numeracy needs of apprentices, trainees and other vocational students in a systematic way. This will involve diversifying the existing literacy services – the accredited bridging courses – to ensure that skills gap training is not only addressed by volunteers. In this sense the new direction is compensatory education, although what is being compensated for is the failure of the schooling system to produce graduates with the basic educational skills needed to continue their formal learning.

Adult literacy research and training and the entry of NLLIA WA

The ALLP as part of its grand vision for a literate nation sought to 'encourage a more comprehensive effort in language and literacy research' (1991: 21). To do this NLLIA was directed to 'enhance its role in stimulating and coordinating research'. As adult literacy was regarded as a new field, the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) was provided with special earmarked funding to conduct this component of its work.

Policy and theoretical development and associated pedagogical practice can be substantially influenced, albeit over time, by a strong research tradition. A substantial pre-service and ongoing professional training is to some extent contingent on a strong research tradition. These conditions, together with an active professional association, can work towards changing practice more effectively than rhetoric or even earmarked funding by building a professional culture of expertise and debate. The operation of processes such as these which might have impinged on the development of a strong relationship between theory and practice and worked to move adult literacy provision forward pedagogically and theoretically have been problematic in Western Australia.

Career structure and professional preparation

The Volunteer Tutor Scheme, by its very nature, has historically recruited an eclectic group of tutors from all walks of life, few with teacher training. While tutor training handbooks were prepared and workshops have been coordinated by the adult literacy branch of TAFE since 1978, as the tutors are all volunteers, there has been a relatively high turnover, and constraints operate on the time that can be devoted to training. In addition, there has been a strong mutual reluctance on the part of providers and tutors to engage with substantial issues or underpinning abstractions. It is thus likely that the prevailing pedagogical model drawn on by the majority of volunteer tutors derives primarily from their own experience of schooling.

On the other hand, while most adult literacy instructors working within TAFE colleges have basic teacher education qualifications, these most often involve preparation to teach in the school system thus perpetuating the notion that adult education in general, and adult literacy in particular, involve merely an extension of the reading and writing techniques and ideas and English instruction employed in primary and secondary schools.[6] Moreover, a high percentage of adult literacy positions are part-time and few positions have been tenured. As a result, little opportunity exits for career advancement without moving out of the field and it can be argued that there has been little incentive for practitioners to enrol in professional development courses.

Unlike preparation for school instruction, there has never been a strong university-based adult literacy teacher education stream in local tertiary institutions despite financial encouragement under the ALLP and the development of the *National framework for professional development of adult literacy and basic education personnel* (TAFE National Staff Development Committee 1994).[7] In the early 1990s, in response to this framework and professional development funding committed through the ALLP, the adult literacy branch of TAFE (the Adult Literacy Services Bureau) began to deliver the federally funded twelve-week course *Adult literacy teaching: A professional development program* which had been developed nationally with input from the University of Technology Sydney. In the light of all this, in Western Australia, the adult literacy teaching course predictably attracted relatively small numbers.

The professional association

The lack of career structure and absence of agreed professional entry qualifications has also militated against the development of a strong professional association. While the Western Australian Adult Literacy Council (with links to the Australian Council for Adult Literacy) was established several decades ago, it has never been representative of the adult literacy field (teachers of ESL to adults in Western Australia for example have their own association, WATESOL) and it has never been a political advocate for professional preparation or standards nor has it advocated on industrial matters. The Western Australian Adult Literacy Council has continued to constitute a networking practical information forum rather than a site in which to engage with and debate substantial ideas and issues of theory and pedagogy.

Research tradition and the entry of NLLIA WA

Almost a decade ago, a significant finding of the joint DILGEA–DEET investigation into the pedagogical relations between adult ESL and adult literacy concerned the fact that the fields of both adult ESL and adult literacy and especially adult literacy were 'seriously under-researched' (Hammond & Wickert 1993: 25). This, the authors observed (p 26), had impacted on curriculum and program development. Adult literacy in Western Australia has similarly not been associated with a strong research tradition. From time to time, while individual academics in each of the local universities have been interested in aspects of adult literacy, there has never been a strong department and postgraduate cohort investigating and teaching in the area. In general, academics interested in literacy included adult literacy as an extension of their interest in school focused literacy education. The entry of the NLLIA had the potential to change this and impact significantly on the profile of adult literacy in Western Australia in the tertiary sector and beyond.

The NLLIA WA office, set up in 1992, drew its reference group and later its board from a wide range of language and literacy stakeholders which included the TAFE, university and school sectors and the various professional associations. The Centre for Professional Development in Language Education (CPDLE) was established at Edith Cowan University and the Centre for Literacy, Culture and Language Pedagogy (CLCLP) at Curtin University of Technology. In addition, two nodes, one for adult literacy and one for child ESL, were also established with separate funding to each. While, to some extent, this provided a degree of prominence to adult literacy within the tertiary sector, the main research interests continued to be in child ESL and LOTE (languages other than English). Nevertheless, somewhat optimistically, it was felt at the time that the NLLIA's presence in the state would assist in the coordination and facilitation of adult language and literacy research and development in Western Australia.

Apart from the activities generated by the Adult Literacy Research Network Node, very few of the research or professional development programs focused on literacy, or language for adults. The Adult Literacy Research Network Node allocated up to $30,000 annually in small-scale grants for local research projects. In 1994, for example, projects funded included: investigations into the cost-related factors affecting the viability of workplace language and literacy training; recruitment concerns for potential employers of NESB workers; the interrelationship of language and culture and its relevance to adult literacy programs for NESB learners; an investigation into the use of first language instruction in preliteracy adult learners; the development of guidelines for RPL (recognition of prior learning) in placement in the Certificate of General English for Adults (CGEA) – the most widely used curriculum vehicle for adult instruction in Western Australia; and, a review of work access and workplace literacy programs for Aboriginal people.

While the myriad of small-scale grants certainly gave grass roots practitioners the opportunity to engage in little research projects, overall these appeared to be of variable quality. Despite mentoring, the strategy suffered from limited available expertise and mechanisms for adequately shaping the projects funded or monitoring their quality. It could also be argued that the diversity of the field itself militated against theory development and the accumulation of research knowledge and tradition from the bottom up via the small-scale grant system. The patchy quality of most of the research together with a concomitant lack of interest from most of academia in related fields of inquiry meant that findings were unlikely to be disseminated or adequately critiqued.

In addition to the small-scale grants, the Western Australian office of the NLLIA also successfully attracted funding for several large national research projects and the universities were encouraged to collaborate to access such research funding. A tertiary literacy skills project, for example, involved a consortium of three local universities and Macquarie University in New South Wales. Some collaboration also occurred across other sectors. In 1994, following the impetus from the South Metropolitan College of TAFE, the South Metropolitan College and the Centre for Literacy Culture and Language Pedagogy through the NLLIA's Western Australian office successfully competed for a DEET-funded Adult Literacy National Project for $121,000 to investigate the application of the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competence to curriculum development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Taylor 1995a).

One node's chief aim was to 'promote, implement and disseminate the findings of local, national and overseas research in the language and literacy area' (NLLIA WA Office 1994: 1). Annual research forums and symposiums were held from October 1993 and brought together researchers and practitioners interested in adult literacy from the TAFE, university and ESL fields and from 1995 the NLLIA collaborated with WAALC to present a jointly organised annual conference.

In 1996, in response to a funding cutback, the Western Australian office was reconfigured as the Centre for Research and Development in Language and Literacy (CRDLL) with a substantial pruning of its activities. The potential for NLLIA WA to impact successfully on language and literacy debate and provision in Western Australia was limited. The life span of this potentially reformist initiative had been too short to evolve a distinctive tradition in which theory and pedagogy-building could occur, particularly so in the area of professional training and development.

Discussion

We have come a long way

While the foregoing narrative has made explicit and attempted to explicate the stresses and tension in the local scene, there is no doubt that adult literacy has come a long way since the first classes in a technical college in central Perth.

Today, as a result of the post-1991 increase in national funding and focus, literacy and language services for adults have achieved a significantly increased profile particularly in the vocational training sector. In Western Australia this is manifest in the fact that the accredited English language and literacy bridging courses account for the second highest component of the state training profile. At a time when curriculum and professional development have become the responsibility of individual, commercially-oriented training organisations with very little targeted funding from the state, a professional development support program and moderation network associated with the Certificates in General Education for Adults continues to be funded by the training department. This arrangement to some extent encourages networking and works to combat the isolation that literacy teachers still experience within the training system and the unintended effects of competition, one of which is to discourage collaboration between training providers.

The adult literacy field is however struggling to remain undivided in the face of several large juggernauts – competition policy, a deregulated training market, the implementation of industry training packages with what looks like an obliteration of any opportunity to foreground the need for specialist literacy teaching – because unless collaboration can be maintained the weak and the powerless (among whom teachers of adult literacy must count themselves) will go to the wall.

Profit and loss

In more recent times during the 1990s, the accountability systems developed over nearly 50 years of Australian migrant education provision have offered benchmarking methods for federal monitoring of funds and outputs to other sectors of federally funded literacy provision. Major shifts in classroom methodology have occurred. For example, group instruction has mostly been replaced by individual study programs. Teacher discretion on content and reporting have evolved in the 1990s to become highly prescribed national monitoring processes through outcomes reporting within a training regimen with an increased emphasis on credentials.

There may be good government housekeeping sense in applying strict monitoring of ongoing funding to politically sensitive areas such as migrant and refugee support. However, at times, in other areas of provision, accountability factors have strongly defined the nature of the service possible and the kinds of teaching methods compatible with outcomes required under funding guidelines. The demanding appetites of accountability tools have at times drawn the focus of teacher attention away from the main event, that is, acquisition of language or literacy by adult learners, and placed program emphasis on reporting schedules. Examples here would include the complex reporting systems for Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program funding and current Flex One to Four programs, all funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Pulling the strands together

Funding provision for literacy for Australian residents other than migrants and refugees has been less permanent in nature and closely associated with the rise in unemployment. In 1973, the Karmel report addressed a need to provide 'learning for life' for the Australian community. The report had reflected a legacy of 20 years of a strong Australian economy and a period of federal Labor government social enlightenment policies. However, by the time the report was released, conditions were changing. Since 1972, unemployment has become a feature of the Australian labour market (see Langmore & Quiggin 1994). A change in federal government in 1975 brought in a period of rigorous economic management. It was not surprising that an argument that suggested that the technical education sector in Western Australia should conduct adult literacy classes for English speaking Australians, and that this would contribute positively to addressing the Western Australian unemployment problem would have been well received within state government instrumentalities.

A strong functionalist and assimilationist intention can be identified in both types of language and literacy programs. The course content placed an emphasis on addressing skills required for accessing employment and work-related activities, where these were relevant. Part of the explanation for why the 1978 curriculum remained in place for a decade and a half quite possibly relates to its functionalist approach. Skills for employment addressed in the curriculums remained relevant in functional and assimilationist terms because unemployment continued to increase over that period.

In Western Australia, this trend may have been more pronounced than in some eastern states. For example, from the 1970s, a popular discourse that informed the pedagogy of community-based literacy provision in Victoria was influenced strongly by Freire's (1972a, 1972b) democratisation principles (see for example back issues of *Fine Print*, the Victorian adult literacy and basic education journal). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, a reformist, democratic model was fostered by programs offered through the City of London Council and Midlands regional councils (see for example Levine 1986: 95ff). The difference in focus may well have been an historical accident. These programs were in place before the significant economic downturn and so a more liberal philosophy was quite possibly able to maintain a toehold.

Over three decades, 1970 to 2000, a shift in educational philosophy for generalist education for adults had moved from an holistic view of life skills encapsulated in the 'learning for life' philosophy of the Karmel report to the latest views of federal policy-makers who exhort working Australians to adopt a personal practice of 'lifelong learning'. While the wording is similar the underlying intent is vastly different.

The short-term nature of much of the adult literacy funding has impacted by limiting: the career structure within the adult literacy teaching profession, educational planning, and infrastructure support. In part, because of its poor cousin image, other areas of powerlessness – gender, ethnicity, disability, low socioeconomic status and unemployment – are attached to literacy issues, sometimes inappropriately. The pedagogical tensions between skills and credentialing, and social justice issues have not raised a spirited or concerted debate. This may be the result of much of the provision being situated within bureaucracies where vested interest and fear of running counter to the organisation were likely to influence the nature and direction of discussion.

The remaining problem

A great deal has indeed been achieved over the period under consideration here and particularly over the last decade. However, it is clear that, despite the creation of a profile and an ever-increasing body of knowledge and skills generated from related disciplines, the engines that generate the 'problem' of adult 'illiteracy' show little sign of slowing down the production. The problems exemplified in this Western Australian narrative are not unique to this state but derive from far more fundamental and pervasive issues.

The area of literacy in general, and adult literacy in particular, is inherently problematic on a number of fronts. Firstly, the adult literacy issue is an historically located social construction and, as such, some do the defining and in doing so construct the *other* as an object-in-need. This renders the project as one inherently to do with issues of equity, power and politics. Secondly, there is a tension between where this social construction of literacy is located – as a right, as a resource or as a problem. As the Western Australian history of adult literacy illustrates there is pragmatic movement between these emphases and between the way each informs the various stakeholders with their vested interest over times.

Thirdly, and inextricably related to or as a consequence of the above, we simply have not been able to develop an adequate and transparent discourse with which to think about the issue. By eschewing the term 'illiteracy' we imply a rejection of the notion of 'deficit' but this rhetorical sleight of hand thinly veils the reality that those without so-designated *adequate* literacy levels are regarded as lacking, as missing out on opportunity, as a wasted national resource, and debilitated and excluded in some manner – patients in need of a dose of cultural capital as defined by the prevailing hegemony. They are constructed as the disadvantaged *other* whether the prevailing hegemony locates this inadequacy as a problem, an abuse or omission of human rights, or as a potential or unrealised resource. Underpinning each of these orientations is a socially constructed *problem*.

In the introduction to his book *The culture of public problems: Drink driving and the symbolic order*, Gusfield (1981: 3) writes:

> At the outset I have had the problem of naming the problem. To talk about the 'drinking-driving problem' is already to assume the character of the phenomenon (automobile safety) and to define it as having such and such a shape. Human problems do not spring up, full blown and announced, into the consciousness of bystanders. Even to recognise a situation as painful requires a system for categorising and defining events. All situations that are experienced by people as painful do not become matters of public activity and targets for public action. Neither are they given the same meaning at all times by all peoples. 'Objective' conditions are seldom so compelling and so clear in their form that they spontaneously generate a 'true' consciousness. Those committed to one or another solution to a public problem see its genesis in the necessary consequences of events and processes; those in opposition often point to 'agitators' who impose one or another definition of reality.

The 'illiterates' are never those who do the defining or the locating of self or the measuring against the benchmark of schooled Standard Australian English – itself a problem. This terminology makes a claim for the high value language it describes. The claim is that the language belongs to the whole community (Australian); that it exists in some objective realm and has nothing to do with individuals who use it (standard); and that it can be conceived of as a single entity (English). None of these mythologies about language can be sustained, yet the current emphasis on testing and reporting rests on a belief that the standard is a reality, and a fixed one, because this is a precondition of reporting. The problem with Standard Australian English is its *narrowness*. It is narrow because, in spite of the fact that it marks and provides a passport to social positions of power and status, it is only one way of speaking and it excludes such a large proportion of the population who do not use it as their birth right for reasons of social class or ethnicity.

It is also interesting that definitions of literacy which have currency in influential public policy and its supporting documents, while moving away from a notion of a skills repertoire, insist on defining the literate social subject as someone who is critically aware (Cumming et al 1998: 3). Current definitions of literacy, in ascribing attributes to people or nominating aspects of social practice, create a meaning which is almost indistinguishable from that of 'educated'. While academics favour critical awareness as the most important aspect of literacy because it invokes the rhetoric of empowerment and reflects their own experience, the literate person is meant to be the product of schooling (but so often is not) and herein lies the circular argument which makes it so difficult for us to break the cycle of language deprivation which is of our own making.

The problem of adult literacy begins in schools. The ALLP focuses on the need to reform literacy education in the schooling sector while acknowledging that because the 'social circumstances of some children are such as to make effective learning virtually impossible, it is unreasonable to expect that schools can compensate for factors beyond their control' (DEET 1991: 6). Part of the strategy to address the causes of adult 'illiteracy' is to be found in the national curriculum project and in particular the revision of the school English curriculum.[8] The incoherence deriving from the gap between theory and practice which we have described in this chapter is also evident in the English Statement published in the Curriculum Framework for public comment – the *Draft Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 in Western Australia* (Education Department of Western Australia 1997).

The English Statement was drafted by a committee comprising teachers in the primary, secondary, post compulsory and vocational sectors as well as academics and public administrators. In framing a discussion about the place of the subject English in the overarching curriculum the committee chose to draw a distinction between 'functional literacy' and 'critical literacy' as learning outcomes for this subject. This distinction is meaningless in theoretical terms: to understand how language constitutes social identity, powerful speaking positions and authoritative and influential texts is a necessary condition for the production of written or verbal language designed to achieve specific effects. Designing language to achieve specific effects is a definition of functional literacy as is understanding the specific effects of spoken or written language. It is not possible to conceive of or to teach either of these in isolation. Notwithstanding the political of noncommitment, how should the failure of this committee to incorporate and apply current theories be understood? While it has been noted that in other states there can be a significant difference between the postulation of the policy and curriculum documents and the enacted curriculum (Cumming et al 1998), it seems that in Western Australia there is yet to take place a translation of current theories of language as social practice, and the insight they provide about the relationships between language and power, into the overarching policy statements, the pedagogy or the practice.

The results of the ABS national literacy survey (1997a, 1997b) suggest that schools fail in the social project to produce educated or literate people about 50 per cent of the time. Why then is an acknowledgment of this failure lacking from any of the definitions of adult literacy enjoying currency at the present time? Current definitions of literacy focus on the *effects* of the acquisition of valued language competence arguing that the literate person is employable, intelligent, self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware. Ironically, the term 'adult literacy' then turns these definitions on their heads. When literacy is qualified by the adjective 'adult' the term is suddenly deprived of its associated positive social values. Adult literacy points to a failure in schooling and of schools while serving another agenda. But it is the individuals who failed to benefit from this kind of political pragmatism who must bear the shame, and sometimes, by association, their teachers. Professionals who teach adult literacy have spoken of their marginalisation not only in the learning institution, but also in the community where family and friends devalue their work with 'no-hopers'. The honour of high-value, high-status institutions is defended by a force shield of sophisticated language practice which misnames the problem and ascribes causes to individuals or to other, more vulnerable, social institutions (the family that fails to instil a love of reading in its offspring makes an easy target).

However, as Gusfield (1981: 5–6) says:

> ...the problem of responsibility [for finding solutions to public problems] has both a cultural and a structural dimension. At the cultural level it implies a way of seeing phenomena...At a structural level, however, fixing responsibility implies different institutions and different personnel who are charged with obligations and opportunities to attack the problem. Here too, change from one set of causal definitions, of cognitive conceptualisations, to another carries implications for institutions. The relation of causal responsibility to political responsibility is then a central question in understanding how public problems take shape and change.

What is most often left out of public debates is the personal interest of whoever is proclaiming, asserting, arguing or theorising. One of the most highly valued aspects of both academic and bureaucratic discourse (good examples of Standard Australian English used for public debate) is its capacity for apparent detachment and disguise of personal interest. It is true that if all individuals in the society developed a comparable facility to produce and understand the significance of utterances of this kind, it would be possible to posit a true democracy; while they do not, clearly there is inequity in a distribution of the resources available to a civil society, including well paid, secure employment, effective participation in public life, and good health.

Conclusion

Unlike the situation in some states, adult literacy provision in Western Australia is largely situated in the vocational education and training sector. This is due largely to the lack of an established formal infrastructure and funding base to support community-based adult education, which may itself be a consequence of a history of special grants funding to the state. In the more populous states, the well established community sector has provided a fertile ground for a literacy practice framed as social action to flourish. This location and the increasing VET focus in the school sector offer an opportunity for dialogue between teachers of English and teachers of literacy.[9] Despite the differences between Western Australia and the eastern states that we have identified, we are required to grapple with fundamental issues not least of which is how we see and define literacy.

Here we have asserted that the adult literacy field is under-theorised and riddled with unclarified ambiguities that are manifested in pedagogies, accompanying discourses and structural arrangements. At the heart of this is the lack of clarification underpinning the relationships between 'language' and 'literacy', between 'child' and 'adult' literacy and between viewing literacy primarily as a national resource, a human right or as a social problem.

Notes

1 Watts (1982: 189) in reviewing research and policies in Aboriginal education discusses this issue in some length and made the same recommendation.

2 The Australian Language, Literacy and Numeracy Scales were commissioned by the federal Department of Employment Education and Training but were rejected by the adult literacy field at a national forum hosted by DEET in August 1991. In October 1991 the Interim Literacy Course Matrix (ILCM) was agreed on as a measure of student progress for the Special Intervention Program at a meeting of state and territory representatives convened by DEET. A national project was then undertaken to develop the English Language and Literacy Competence Framework and this was followed by the development of the National Reporting System that was finally completed in 1996.

3 The Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) were introduced into Western Australia in 1993. Subsequently the Adult Literacy Services Bureau worked to ensure that credentials gained in these courses were recognised by TAFE Admissions for the purposes of entry and selection to vocational courses. The implementation of the CGEA in Western Australia formalised the capacity of access and bridging courses to facilitate articulation into mainstream vocational courses for the first time.

4 For a brief period in 1993/1994, prior to the devolution of non-core business activities by all government departments, the Western Australian Department of Training established an Access and Equity Directorate which brought together the four bureaux responsible for Aboriginal Services, Disability Services, Adult Literacy Services and Women and the Adult Migrant Education Service.

5 These tools include: *Built in – not bolted on: Information kit for language, literacy and numeracy coordinators on incorporating communications skills into training packages* (DETYA 1998)

6 A similar situation was reported for Victoria (see McConnell 1991 cited in Evans, Jenkins & Wilson 1996: 61).

7 Compare for example the TAFE/university professional development partnership reported by Evans, Jenkins and Wilson (1996).

8 Low levels of literacy are commonly and incorrectly referred to as illiteracy.

9 The accredited literacy bridging courses from the vocational sector are now being adopted in some secondary schools.

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Sleight of hand: Job myths, literacy and social capital

Ian Falk

Falling for the policy line

This is a story set in the context of the gap in policy between *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) and Kemp's 'mutual obligation' policy (Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1997). The plot of the story tells how some people try to become employed and can't because they fall for the policy line. The theme of the story is their struggle and failure to meet society's expectations of what it is to be literate, confident and employed.

The long-term unemployed people who are the subject of this chapter include both speakers of English as a first language (the majority) and English as second language learners who try to gain an education and qualifications that will act as the ticket to a job. They repeatedly follow the 'right' procedures, they access and attempt to access courses that show them how to get jobs, and how to acquire the skills for those jobs, only to have the doors shut, the courses gone or inaccessible, the jobs not there, the promises broken, and then have the threat of their allowance being cut for 'being illiterate'. When they do hear of networks that include employed people, they find that those people did not, in recent times at least, get their jobs by joining the employment placement agency queues. Society and the government blame these unemployed people. It's their own fault – who else's fault could it be? These long-term unemployed believe 'the policy line' – that training, even lifelong learning, is likely to result in employment.

Society can understandably ask why this should be so. How is it that some people do get work as a result (we think) of going through the 'right' procedures and taking the 'right' education and training courses, while others can do the same and not get a job? The answer lies in two directions, I argue in this chapter. One answer lies is in the lost 'third capital' called social capital, specifically the mechanism of social capital known as 'networks' with their associated oil of trust. The other answer lies in the fact that we persist in nominalising 'literacy' rather than putting it into practice as the process of *learning*. These two factors are related and entwined, a message that I hope will be clear as the voices of the long-term unemployed people speak in this chapter.

The main forms of literacy entrenched in policy in Australia presently are components of *human* capital which, like other forms of capital, can be utilised without reference to their effects on the overall common good. Policy uses literacy for the whims of the political power of the time. Researchers get involved in debates about the nature of literacy as texts, as possessing power and of the proficiency of textual performance – all of which serve the underlying human capital model of literacy as a tool for indiscriminate ends. Practitioners battle with conflicting stories about 'basic skills', 'empowerment' and 'whole language'. My question is: have we as literacy educators and researchers fallen into the trap of nominalising literacy as an entity rather than operationalising it as a process? The focus on form rather than function seems to have taken our eyes off the main game, that is, the literacy resources that are required for learning. Learning is a social process, and involves a process of interactions – of people interacting with other people, with their computers, with rooms, buildings, books, with 'the texts of their thoughts' which are in themselves all products of situated sociocultural interaction.

As a social process, learning is ultimately restricted by social rules and values that result, more or less, in the common good. Given our recognition both of the importance of physical capital (such as tools, place and technologies), and of our society's more recent flirtation with human capital, we seem to have missed on recognising the significance of the *social* capital required for effective social interaction and participation. The empowerment rhetoric has led to a dead end – what does it *mean*? What it *could* mean is that people need to have the resources to engage in critical social learning. Critical social learning impacts directly on the development of trust, social cohesion, economic outcomes and the common good.

We would all probably acknowledge the place of physical (economic, infrastructural, technological, environmental) capital in an accounting and economic sense. Also, most literacy educators understand (though may not agree with) the idea of human capital as being associated with skills. However, the significance of the *social* capital required for effective social interaction seems to have been left off the agenda. After all, adequate stocks of physical capital 'things' and human capital 'skills' can only be put into circulation and used (drawn on) through social processes. This is a crucial point to bear in mind as the ensuing discussion of research outcomes unfolds, since networks operationalise information and put it into circulation for others to access. Membership of networks with employment information, therefore, is likely to be a crucial factor in finding scarce jobs in a tight labour market.

To help clarify the difference between human capital and social capital, let me now set down some points about human capital, and follow with a comparison of human with social capital.

Human capital theory, policy and literacy education

The relationship between policy on literacy, funding that flows from it, and the effects of the policy strategies on their intended recipients is a complex one. This chapter examines the intersection of these three elements rather than focusing on one or the other, since it is the interrelationship that defines policy effectiveness for its intended purposes, not the nature or intent of the policy itself. Funding for the national and coordinated provision of a large number of adult literacy courses became more widely available as part of the Commonwealth government's *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991). This policy explicitly connected improvement in literacy skills to enhanced employment prospects under a group of policies at that time loosely described as the National Training Reform Agenda. Connections between people's work, their skill proficiency and economic productivity imply causal assumptions. But are they connected in a causal relationship? The literature suggests not.

The central principle of human capital theory holds that human beings are measured in terms of their monetary value (Marginson 1993: 31), which is to say it is an economic principle, rather than a social or cultural one. Marginson describes its origins as beginning in slavery. Later, as self-employed 'artisans and wage workers, human beings became the owners of their own human capital' (p 31). On the basis of his long and well-substantiated argument using historical, economic and social precepts, Marginson continues to show the links that were made between human capital and education, including the '…more free market guise…led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)' (1993: 31). However, this association of greater productivity and education was poorly grounded:

> …human capital has failed to find empirical grounding for its key assumptions: education determines productivity, productivity determines earnings, and therefore education determines earnings…(Marginson 1993: 53)

As a result of the changing relationship between human capital theory, education and economic rationalism, education is now seen by Western governments such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia as a branch of economics exclusively, with little or no social or cultural policy implications. But this present situation has not arisen accidentally. Fordism's (and the related Taylorism's) rigid central principles of mass production and mass consumption held sway over Western economies from about 1914 until the 1973 recession (Harvey 1989: 140). The seriousness of that recession, triggered by the Arab oil embargo, can only be seen in hindsight, as corporations found themselves forced, as Harvey (1989) describes it, into '…a period of rationalisation, restructuring, and intensification of labour control…'. This period of change from Fordism and Taylorism to 'flexible accumulation' of capital was marked by:

> …flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and

> patterns of consumption...new sectors of production...new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. (Harvey 1989: 147)

As well as these features, there was an increasing and expanding internationalisation of labour and capital, as markets and production systems responded to changed and changing circumstances. Australia was no longer a trade 'island' sheltered by distance and protected by a buffer zone of rich natural resources and primary production. Dawkins (1988a: 6) foresaw the implications for Australia:

> The society we want cannot be achieved without a strong economic base. In Australia, this now requires a greatly increased export income, a far more favourable balance of payments...our industry is increasingly faced with rapidly changing international markets in which success depends on, among other things, the conceptual, creative and technical skills of the workforce, the ability to innovate and be entrepreneurial.

Even more significantly, Dawkins (1987: 1) related these desired new features to the need for education and training:

> A better educated and more highly skilled population will be able to deal more effectively with change... At the same time, education facilitates adaptability, making it easier for individuals to learn skills related to their intended profession and improve their ability to learn while pursuing that profession.

The training reform agenda was established by Dawkins, and with it the Training Guarantee Act of 1990 which required business and industry to spend five per cent of their payroll over $200,000 on training or pay the equivalent in tax. Industry training became a growth industry as a result, and industry training literature proliferated (see for example Donaldson & Scannel 1986). The linking of productivity and education and training by Dawkins was, then, 'characterised by a symbiosis between human capital theory and arguments for market reform of education' (Marginson 1993: 50).

The reform included a heavy reliance on characteristics of post-Fordism, called by Harvey a period of 'flexible accumulation' (1989: 147) and by Marginson 'second wave human capital theory' (1993: 149). These characteristics, already outlined, include a freeing up of the educational offering which resulted in the growth in numbers of private providers, entrepreneurialism in traditional providers such as TAFE colleges, a view of education as 'the source of responsiveness to technological change' (Marginson 1993: 149), and the concurrent growth in the discourse of 'quality'.

The human capital view of people as units of capital assumes, Marginson concludes, '...an unreal certainty about the connections between education, work and earnings' (1993: 54). As also noted, the core assumptions of the human capital theory 'were never grounded empirically' (Marginson 1993: 31), a conclusion also reached by Luke who says: '...there is little correlation between literacy and economic growth' (1992: 7) if applied to the whole of a particular society. It is in this broad 'economic' context that adult literacy and significant aspects of the discourses associated with it have developed. Adult literacy is a significant case in governments' agenda for economic change and the inevitable social changes that ensue.

Social capital and learning

Before illustrating the differences between human capital and that of social capital, I will explain the notion of social capital, then draw on some empirical work on social capital and learning processes in communities.

Social capital is the taken-for-granted (and therefore often neglected) 'third capital' after physical and human. Bourdieu introduced the term to the sociological world in his 1983 paper *Economic capital, cultural capital, social capital*, though it has been in use for much longer than that. In fact the first documented use of the term is found in the social communitarian literature (Hanifan 1920). It is noted in early economic literature (see for example Silverman 1935) and then, spaced at considerable intervals, in economic works such as O'Connor (1973). However, it is never really developed in economic work, almost as if it is put in the economic 'too-hard basket'.

Established authorities define social capital in their own ways. Coleman was a highly regarded sociologist, with some major work on social capital (see for example Coleman 1988). Putnam is a political scientist, who used a major ethnography spanning a 25 year period (1993) to establish the contribution of social capital to the development of a civil society. Broadly speaking, social capital 'encompass(es) the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit' (Woolcock 1998: 155). Woolcock is a social scientist with the World Bank. It can be seen that researchers on social capital are now located in every major discipline field that relates to social science, economics and sociology.

Portes observes that: '...whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships' (1998: 7). Networks, norms, relationships of trust (see for example Fukuyama 1995) and the resultant social cohesion involve formal and informal associations – from the formal and informal clubs and associations, to the implicit networks encapsulated by 'old school tie', the Hospital Auxiliary, the email chat groups, to the neighbours over the fence and the lot we meet in the park. We are also talking about every other group, formal and informal, that we all belong to. It's not whether some of us belong to more or fewer networks that counts, it's the nature of those networks that seems to be important.

Two earlier groups of research relate the issue of networks to employment, namely that of Stack (1974) and Granovetter (1973). In each of these cases, it was found that accessing employment was enhanced if people had access to networks outside their immediate circles. Granovetter called these ties strong ties and weak ties. He found that strong ties – those bonds that people used regularly, such as family and neighbourhood interactions – were not as useful for finding employment as the weak ties – those ties that bridged to outside the immediate community. In fact, Gittell and Vidal differentiate between these two kinds of ties by using the terms 'bonding ties' and 'bridging ties' (1998: 10). Stack's (1974) comprehensive ethnography shows how the lack of ties to sources outside the community results in restricted (among other things) knowledge of employment opportunities.

It should be clear from Granovetter's and Stack's studies alone that the business of a simple causal relationship between a more highly skilled population, as Dawkins put it, and skills and greater productivity through increased employment is flawed, posing considerable problems for the notion of human capital, and throwing a great deal of significance on the role of social capital.

Now I will refer to some research my colleagues and I recently conducted to illustrate the comparison between human and social capital (Falk & Harrison 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick 2000). This research analysed the interactions over time between around one hundred leaders in three communities. The multitude of interactions was categorised. We asked the question: what is the nature of the interactive productivity between the local networks in a community? In order to answer that question, we established what the resources were that these participants used to make sense of their worlds. Using various analytic techniques for large and small volumes of transcripts, and making various cross-community comparisons, the levels of interactions between individuals and associations in each of the three communities were compared. So the first point of comparison that is apparent is that this study of social capital and learning has *a focus on the interactions between people*, rather than on the *'skills' and 'knowledge' possessed by individual members* of the communities.

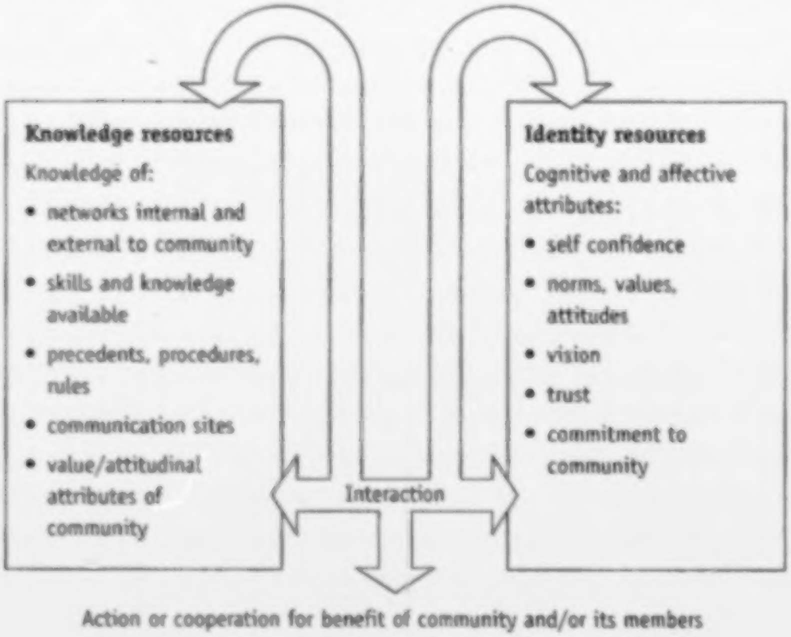
We identified ways in which the communities could be said to learn during these interactions. Using the concept of social capital (with its components of norms, networks and trust) as a basis, we examined the effects and influences of the levels of interaction on the common good in the community. After finding out the nature of these resources, we saw clearly how it was that people engaged in critical learning as they solved the problems of their everyday lives. The critical learning depended on the quality of the resources available for these people to draw on in their network interactions. The resources fell into two main groups – knowledge resources and identity resources. The knowledge resources concern people and common resources that facilitate action through people's interactions, including various forms of literacies. The identity resources concern the need to help people change and foster their identities in ways that promote self-confidence and willingness to act for the common good of their communities.

This research (Falk & Harrison 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) shows that knowledge and identity resources are crucial for the development of social capital, *but that they only become used and useful when brought into play through the interactions between people*. It can therefore be seen that if skills are indeed important, then they are only part of the story, alongside the quality of the interactions that make those skills manifest.

This same research also shows that there is a relationship between social capital and the production of sound socioeconomic conditions (Woolcock 1998). Sound socioeconomic outcomes embrace the notion of the common good referred to earlier. The need to plan and provide for opportunities to interact, opportunities in which the knowledge and identity resources can be practised and applied, is often ignored or assumed. That is, without the interactions afforded by workplaces, participation in community events, activities, meetings and small and large interactions of all kinds, social capital simply cannot develop or be used. However, the qualities of those interactions are equally as important as their existence. Figure 9.1 shows the relationship between social capital and the quality of its component interactions.

Figure 9.1 Building and using social capital

CRLRA (Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, University of Tasmania) model


Knowledge resources
Knowledge of:
• networks internal and external to community
• skills and knowledge available
• precedents, procedures, rules
• communication sites
• value/attitudinal attributes of community
Identity resources
Cognitive and affective attributes:
• self confidence
• norms, values, attitudes
• vision
• trust
• commitment to community
Interaction
Action or cooperation for benefit of community and/or its members

In summary so far, the quality of the knowledge and identity resources available for learning processes is proven to be paramount. Knowledge resources certainly include those so-called 'human capital' literacy elements of basic skills, but it is much more than that. Quality knowledge also includes knowing the 'who, when, where, why and how' of the situation in hand. Identity resources are those resources that shape our identities as we learn to adapt to change, or take on new roles and tasks. Unless we see ourselves 'in the new role' that our learning, education and training knowledge provides us with, we are unlikely to use that new knowledge. So the ways in which knowledge and identity resources intertwine and reciprocate are crucial to critical learning. Such a notion hardly equates with the simple idea of human capital.

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The 'social justice' and 'social coalition' approaches to policy

Following the election of the Coalition government, the (then) Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (1997), released the ministerial statement *Reforming employment assistance.* The document stated that:

> The government has developed a streamlined package of assistance that involves a wide range of assistance to meet the needs of employers and help eligible unemployed people find work. (Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1997: 5)

Changes to the existing training programs for unemployed people who have language, literacy and/or numeracy difficulties were outlined. In particular, the Special Intervention Program (SIP) was scheduled for dismantling in May 1998. This occurred as part of the replacement of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) and the Department of Social Security (DSS) with Centrelink and the tendering out of the development and delivery of labour exchange service training to private and semi-government enterprises. The training placement coordination previously organised centrally by the CES was taken over by the new Private Employment Placement Enterprises (PEPEs) and Employment Placement Enterprises (EPEs), the public equivalent.

The policy context of the research drawn on in this chapter is set at the time of the transition between the Labor government's *Working nation* social welfare policies, which I will call the 'social justice' approach to the matter, and the Coalition government's 'social coalition' approach. The dismantling of *Working nation* paved the way for the approach of the ensuing Coalition government's radical changes to those policies. I will call this approach the social coalition approach, to use the Prime Minister's own term for his newly forged method of tackling social disadvantage. These two approaches to policy equate to two different views about social welfare.

The social justice approach assumes that many people need help to get jobs, that they will be helped to get better jobs if they: (a) have some income to assist with this process – the unemployment benefit or dole; and (b) receive training in skills which will assist them to become more attractive in the job market. These skills may involve complex and 'high order' skills associated with professions or trades, and involve a long period of training, tertiary or further education. However, in the case of those who were long-term unemployed, it was found that a large proportion of these people 'suffered' literacy or numeracy problems. The last two terms of the Labor government (from 1992 onwards) resulted in *Working nation,* a comprehensive and well-articulated set of differentiated provisions of employment-linked training for job seeking people with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

The then Commonwealth Employment Service acted as a screening agent for eligible job seekers in this category, using a simple literacy and numeracy screening mechanism. Eligible people so screened were then referred to a training provider, often a TAFE institute, for more detailed testing and referral to specific literacy and language training courses. These courses fell into two broad groups – those for teaching English to speakers of other languages, and those for teaching literacy and numeracy to those for whom English was their mother tongue. Within each of these two broad groupings, there were groups of courses from beginning levels to advanced levels, but all had a job seeking focus. Even the beginning literacy courses utilised materials and content which was employment and work related, or taught a range of job seeking skills.

The second policy approach, the social coalition approach, encourages the unemployed to seek and become employed, while training and education are treated as secondary tools rather than as a primary focus. Here, government sees its role as providing a free market environment for job placement, with training paid from public funds only for the extremely disadvantaged, and only if all else had failed, and not for long periods. 'Work for the dole' has become a reality, with groups such as GreenCorps charged with finding useful work for unemployed people to carry out their side of the 'mutual obligation', where the government's obligation is to provide some financial support while the recipient's obligation is to work for it. The Coalition government that took power from the Labor Party from 1996 has introduced a free market approach to employment agencies, dismantling the CES and the DSS in favour of Centrelink and a variety of tendering arrangements for private employment placement providers, reducing its financial support for training to a very small trickle. Lately, the free-market approach has been expanded to embrace the term 'social coalition', focusing on the role of partnerships to help tackle social disadvantage.

There are elements of social capital in both the social justice and the social coalition approaches. Social capital is locked into the Labor Party's education and training policy, while it is the Coalition government's notion of a social coalition that provides the link between literacy and social capital.

The notion of 'mutual obligation' in social welfare policies

The term 'social coalition' has been coined in response to what many see as the government's responsibility for social cohesion (see for example Editor 2000a: 16) It is a term that is used in the social capital literature to refer to the reciprocal ties between people that bind a society together (see for example Woolcock 1998). Social capital is also used by both sides of politics in Australia, as evidenced by the Labor Party's opposition policy for education and training (noted earlier in this chapter) during their national conference in Hobart in 1997, and Howard's many references to social capital in his earlier speeches as Prime Minister. However, social capital carries implications for a radical new way of viewing policy, one that Stewart-Weeks (1999: 2) describes as:

> ...a profound challenge to the way we have become used to seeing public policy and government operate....you have to confront the need for

> profound, systemic change in the methods, structures and values of government... The social capital logic challenges the balance between government and civil society.

So, is the message that we should not hold our collective breaths waiting for government to embrace this new position? Perhaps not. On the one hand, there is Minister Kemp's established record of back-to-basics literacy policy initiatives. On the other hand, there is the Prime Minister's current policy discourse about the social coalition that brings to a head a set of formerly different ideological strands of rhetoric endorsing the notion of a partnership 'between business, government and welfare organisations aimed at tackling social disadvantage' (Editor 2000a: 16). Using our lens of social and human capital, Kemp's policy can be seen as promoting only the mechanical literacy tools of *human* capital, while Howard's partnership rhetoric (and a partnership *is,* after all, a network) overlays the principles of *social* capital.

Underpinning the current policy moves for a social coalition lies the 'mutual obligation' principles referred to earlier. The reciprocity envisaged in mutual obligation is between the recipients of social welfare and other sectors in society. The welfare recipient's role is epitomised presently through 'work-for-the-dole' schemes. The corporate sector is another partner, their role captured by the Prime Minister's associated notion of 'corporate philanthropy'. The community's role, formalised through the volunteer sector, is signalled in the Prime Minister's latest rural vote-catcher, the Australian Rural Partnerships Foundation. This foundation provides business with a tax-exempt structure for donating funds to rural Australia through a partnership between government, the Sidney Myer Fund and community groups. Admirable as these initiatives may be, they leave to one side the idea and implications of the term 'obligation'. Through its social capital analysis, this chapter suggests that there is a significant flaw in assuming that people will feel obliged in the relationship of reciprocity expected of mutual obligation. As in any initiative, there have to be benefits for all parties in the partnership. And at the time of the research discussed in the next section, parties to the new policy initiatives are seen to be struggling with the benefits of the mutuality.

A study of the effects of policy changes on the long-term unemployed using the framework of human and social capital

The study employed a qualitative case study approach in order to build some theory concerning the effects of policy change on the long-term unemployed, specifically those identified as being in need of literacy and numeracy improvement. In the study, 23 people were interviewed, consisting of 15 long-term unemployed people who are or were involved in adult literacy courses. They were selected because they had experienced the policy regime of at least one major change of government (and policy) at the federal level. There were four participants representing employment placement agencies of some kind, such as Centrelink. Four people interviewed were adult literacy and numeracy providers, public and private. These people were all interviewed using a semi-structured schedule with open-ended questions and probe questions. The intention was to gain as much information as possible about the ways in which the long-term unemployed had experienced 'being unemployed' during the time when policy affecting the training provisions for long-term unemployed people changed radically.

My intention in this section is to draw on the parts of the data from the study that relate specifically to the point I want to make here, namely that to be successful, welfare policy related to the unemployed must address both human and social capital elements. One without the other produces ignorance rather than knowledge growth, contributes to reduced trust in civic and social processes and structures, and results in a loss of social cohesion.

The skills associated with human capital may well play an important role in accessing and controlling the kinds of social forces that come with globalisation but, as this chapter argues, they are not enough. The knowledge explosion is one aspect of these forces – how do we find, sort and sift the knowledge we need to operate in today's world? The flipside of the coin, however, is how we cope with these forces of change as people. That is, how are our identities affected, and should they be affected, in coping with the rate of change and knowledge expansion?

The research referred to earlier (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) clearly establishes the role of identity (including self-esteem and self-confidence) and its reshaping during both learning and in adapting to social change. Where are the explicit policies and programs that cater for this? Perhaps the gap implied by this rhetorical question is indicated by the move to the social coalition. There is strong political evidence that governments cannot afford to place all their eggs in the economic rationalist basket, as the Goss and Kennett election defeats and the parallel rise in popularity of Pauline Hanson illustrate. Rural Australians have made their voices felt in a number of ways, and underlying these ways is the loss of trust they feel in their politicians and political systems (see for example Editor 2000b; Woolcock 1999). This loss of trust is implicated in the reported reduction in social cohesion and social capital (Putnam 1995).

Using the framework of human and social capital, human capital could be seen as 'knowledge', where I take knowledge to include knowledge of who, what, when, where and how, so incorporating skills as well. The form of capital that embraces the productivity of the interactions between people, providing for them to change their identities to embrace learning and change, is social capital. Both are necessary, neither is sufficient alone. I will present some illustrative examples from the data that show the two kinds of capital at work, and then close with some comments as to the significance of these examples for this chapter.

Human capital at work

It is well established that adult literacy students have acquired the dominant societal discourse of literacy as basic skills (see for example Falk 1991). As members of the society, they have been exposed to media and other talk so that they have come to perceive that the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and spelling with some accuracy are at the core of improving their chances in life. The study reported here confirms it yet again. As one participant put the feeling, summing up for most of them:

> *If people can read, they can better themselves.*

Classic representations of the popular 'more skills equals a better life' scenario also take the form of a belief in the positive potential benefits of qualifications:

> *I'm just doing an adult literacy course at the moment to get a high school certificate from Grade 10, and I'm doing maths, English and computers.*

And training in general is perceived to have its benefits:

> *You need training to do more jobs.*

The benefits are reported as more jobs, as in the instance above, but also in seemingly minor yet important and functional ways:

> *...my maths and everything has picked up well, and when I go into a shop now, and if they give me the wrong change, like, I can sort of figure my change out straight away and get it back. And my English and my presentation have come along a bit better than it was, like my actual speech and everything else.*

The link between literacy, lower socioeconomic class and unemployment also surfaces explicitly from time to time, as this twenty-year-old long-term unemployed man reports:

> *...if you're unemployed, then you're in the lower grade of society. It sucks. But I mean there's not much I can do about it at the moment apart from just go back to school and stuff.*

Literacy is seen to offer a way out of this class trap. As the same adult as in the previous quote continues:

> *If people can read, they can better themselves.*

However, the hoped-for outcome of a job is apparently not often forthcoming, as these extracts demonstrate:

> *You just get sick of doing courses, too. And you want to get out and get a job, and there's nothing around, see?*
>
> *There's no work around.*
>
> *There is less work.*
>
> *There's more unemployment out there...so when there is some work there is so many people up for the one job, and of course only one person is going to get it. That makes you feel very upset and depressed.*

Disillusionment sets in because the lack of employment is an open secret:

> *The work is not there any more...the companies haven't got the money to spend.*
>
> *They [the employment placement agencies] know there's no work.*
>
> *They're making it harder to find work, and the work's not there, making it harder for you...you know – like these things you've got to do to get the unemployment [benefit], when they know very well the work is not there any more.*

And a final comment from a participant that seems to sum up the feelings of being required to 'go through the motions' of pretending there are jobs, but knowing there are none for them:

> *We're trapped...*

In essence, what these reports show is the construction of the long-term unemployed identities as being characterised by illiteracy, as needing education, as accepting that literacy leads to jobs and as being at the low end of the social scale. By and large, these identities respond to change in one narrow way. The change they respond to is the lack of availability of work, or of the type of work they used to be able to do. Their response is for their identities to become characterised by disillusionment, despair and lacking in self-esteem.

Social capital at work

It will be recalled that social capital includes the networks, social norms and trust that build social cohesion. Social capital is produced through the social interactive processes that draw on the skills and knowledge acquired through learning in all its forms, including education and training programs. The links between people that result in trusting relations are as important for effective learning as is the appropriateness of the knowledge resources. Adult literacy and community education have come to be recognised for their role in supporting 'second chance' learning. This means that those who have for some reason missed out on formal education in their earlier years can have a second chance at learning through provision of learning programs for adults. It is, in effect, concerned with reconstructing identities so people can see themselves as learners, and in roles that they previously were unprepared to undertake. One of the key features of these programs that appears to underlie their success is the manner in which they develop trust, confidence and supporting networks among their adult students (see for example Falk 2000), as well as the integrity of the continuity of provision of the learning.

One private literacy provider put this relationship – between trust first, then skills – as clearly as any I have ever heard:

> *I needed to build up trust first. I then contrived a way for clients to show me their skills...*

But trust is undermined by systems that create suspicion through entrenched anomalies. The biggest such anomaly is the 'literacy=job' equation, where the participants in this study could clearly see that literacy and further education do not provide an automatic passport to a job. They know the work is not there, and that its nature has changed to render it inaccessible to them, but the system 'pretends' the equation is correct, even to the extent where the job placement agencies are not allowed to give out information about jobs under circumstances that seem inexplicable to some:

> *...they wasn't allowed to tell me who it was or where it was – like a job – what area it was in. That system is no good.*

The notion of human capital does not seem to have served these members of society very well at all as a theory by which to conduct their lives.

Some people *do* get jobs. However, those in job placement agency queues are not in the right networks to find out about the vacancies. So what networks *will* help get jobs? One English as a second language learner replied in this way to the questions: What would help you find a job right now? What do you need most?

> *Sometimes knowing someone in a business. If people have friends in a job, they have connections.*

And what might be these helpful connections?

> *Government friends. And some of my friends have connections with a church.*

One twenty-year-old young man described the problem as follows:

> *There is work in building areas, but that's only if you are 'in the know'. You've got to know somebody in the business or something like that. Or there is work in hospitality, because it's quite a big market. But a lot of those jobs are already taken by family members and stuff like that. This is a big part of employment as a whole, that you have to be in the know before you can get a job, no matter how much training you've had, or what education you've done.*

There is a perception evident in the data, typified well by the above young man, that the amount of training and level of education will increasingly not necessarily result in a job. This youth only needs enough money to get his education and a job. As he said:

> *To get an education, I just need that money to get started, so my inspiration doesn't fall through the floor. I haven't got the money [for Year 11 schooling]. I've got no income. I don't qualify for any allowances. I'm just getting in deeper and deeper while I'm at school.*

Bring them together and what have you got?

It seems that when human capital and social capital are combined, learning, education and training are perceived as more effective. The role of developing new identities as part of the learning process emerges as a crucial element for success in learning and coping with social changes:

> *Going back to adult literacy and basic education was a very important step for me in having, getting, gaining self-confidence and actually wanting to achieve something.*

Another literacy student put it this way:

> *I was just in a ditch and I couldn't get out of it and they really lifted me out of that.*

And another:

> *It's...given me a bit of self-confidence.*

Forming new identities as active, learning, job seekers is fostered by the building of self-esteem. The one word answer of a participant to the question of what was most important in getting a job sums it up – she said: '...confidence'. Confidence is at the core of being able to use the skills and knowledge that are acquired, a point made graphically by this private literacy provider:

> *Clients could write and read but had no transference of this into a workplace.*

The reason is, of course, that basic literacy skills by themselves are simply not enough. What is needed are the social skills as well, and if not explicitly taught or addressed, their lack will cause the best intended initiatives of policy to founder.

The significance of the missing 'social capital' to effective learning and, indeed to the effective implementation of literacy policy, is underlined by these participants' extracts. It takes time to achieve the learning that involves both human and social capital, and it takes consistency of personnel and provision. This can be summed up as the Integrity of Continuity Principle that I established in recent research (Falk, Golding &Balatti 2000). It's all very well to have skills, but putting them into practice requires a reliable context of use, not a moving target in the sense of being here one day, gone the next. A context of use is a place where the skills are used, such as a workplace, a training room, a computer or a community setting. The context of use always involves networks of either people or texts that have been created by people. The context of use is, therefore, always a social place. The people networks either consist of real people or texts and artefacts that are a product of people in our society. That is, without the context of use, literacy skills cannot be used. Nor can they be useful.

By bringing human and social capital together, we increase the capacity of people to learn and respond to change. The networks, shared values and trust they acquire through their interactions serve to bring the appropriate knowledge together in the process of shaping and shifting people's perceptions of themselves – that is, their identities – in ways that *manage* learning and change rather than simply being carried along on the tide.

The sleight of hand: Discussion and conclusion

The interview extracts presented in the previous section show how literacy education is seen by the participants as one aspect of the dimension of 'knowledge' – a crucial step in acquiring qualifications that will help them gain employment. Their comments also recognise that the knowledge and skills are but one step, and only a small part of the requirements for managing change and learning for life. They are also only one piece of the puzzle of how to get a job in a tight labour market – probably any labour market. Literacy educators have known for decades the crucial element of 'self-esteem' or 'self-confidence' in education and training. They know it allows participants to slowly come to grips with their changing roles in their identity formation as learners and doers in different capacities. They know intuitively that the identity dimension is as important as the knowledge dimension. They also know that the 'interactive opportunities' to acquire knowledge and hone their identities as lifelong learners are vital in bringing together both knowledge and identity resources into the active social forum. But as yet there has not been an accepted way to insert the discourse of the 'social' into the policy discourse of the 'economic'.

In essence, the research shows a rather depressing picture of how people try to find work and fail. They fail because they are trapped by the sleight of hand of the policy equation that assumes 'literacy=job'. There is a demonstrated mismatch between these participants' expectations of what it is to be literate, confident and employed and the reality of unemployment. In spite of the official employment statistics, these people find that the work is simply not there. Either there are no jobs at all, or the nature of work has changed so much as to make it unobtainable for these people, even if they were 'literate'. Assistance to engage in further education and lifelong learning has shrunk so as to make it almost non-existent for some groups, in defiance of the Integrity of Continuity Principle noted earlier. One twenty-year-old young man, who is trying to combine a return to complete Year 11 of schooling with job seeking, puts it this way:

> *...they haven't opened up any new options. They seem to have just cut out as many options as they could. You can't go and study. They want you to do what they want you to do, not what you yourself can do.*

Lifelong learning fades into the status of a cruel mythology when there is the threat of allowances being cut for 'being illiterate'. Employment *is*, however, possible for some. Such jobs are actually found not by going through the systemic job placement procedures, but through the closed networks that include employed people. It's not what you know, but who you know that counts here. These networks of employment opportunities are indeed an extension of the 'old school tie' and 'funny handshake' networks, but giving them these facile and catchy titles is a deceptive endorsement, and takes one's mind off the power and pervasiveness of the networks. In fact, the networks represent the site where the three elements noted early in the chapter intersect in reality. They are policy, its strategic funding mechanisms and the intended effects on recipients.

There are strong policy formation and implementation implications in this finding if policy-makers are genuine about wishing policies to be effective. It seems as if strong bonding ties might presently be encouraged by existing structures and procedures, while the research has shown these to be damaging to job seeking when not balanced with ties that bridge to networks outside the closed community – the so-called weak ties or bridging ties (Granovetter 1973; Gittell & Vidal 1998). The potential power of weak or bridging ties in finding employment is therefore diminished by present structures based on the idealised connections between capital and economic productivity, a fact that decreases the likelihood of finding jobs.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, 'If you don't learn, you die'. In a way, literacy does provide *some* of the skills and technology needed for learning. Learning is about employing these skills in pursuit of the satisfaction of human curiosity through finding out more about our own and society's possibilities. It is possible that social capital can serve the advancement of policy by providing a language and conceptual framework that includes both the skills and the human relationship dimensions of effective learning. It is discursively armed with the right terms, such as 'capital'. It makes sense, it fits the world as we know it, it allows a vision of a world as we would like it to be, and it is used by both sides of politics. Not only politicians, but bureaucrats in all Commonwealth and state departments are using it.

But there are cautions about the cooption of social capital for policy use. First, it could be argued that the closed, bonding networks of the old school tie are social capital. If so, they have a negative effect if used in the absence of weak ties – at least an exclusionary effect – on the people whose voices have been reported here. The caution, then, lies in the *effects* of social capital on various groups, a caution that needs to be noted by those concerned with policy. For example, funding networks for good community purposes or programs needs to be tempered by funding networks with particular *qualities*. It is to be hoped that this chapter has shown that social capital also has the potential to show up such potential problem areas.

A second caution about social capital lies in the way it has the potential to be used as an excuse or reason to reduce support and resources for equal opportunity. A social coalition that reneges on government support on the grounds that 'people should work together cooperatively to provide their own solutions' is a denial of a principle responsibility of governments and needs to be watched.

There is a third and final caution, related to the idea of mutual obligation. It links to the social capital principle of reciprocity – the give and take of social relations. There has to be something in it for people to want to participate in society. Jobs, satisfaction, self-esteem and enhancement of identity are a few ways that people achieve this. The present government's emphasis is on the principle of 'mutual obligation' that underlies social welfare programs in Australia. While the new Australian Rural Partnerships Foundation provides an example of what is in it for the corporate sector, a lack of employment opportunities in many parts of the country makes any benefits for the welfare groups doubtful. Perhaps a shift towards a refined principle of mutual *benefit* might better capture the essential – and missing – requirement for success in harnessing the powers and benefits of literacies in learning to become a socially cohesive society.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge the work of Ms Suzanne Crowley in the conduct of the research discussed in this chapter.

10 National literacy benchmarks and the outstreaming of ESL learners

Penny McKay

Introduction

Australia has gained an international reputation in past years for its policies, programs and research in primary and secondary schools addressing the needs of non-English speaking background learners. A significant pool of expertise has developed, and the teaching and support of newly arrived English as a second language (ESL) learners has a history of being well resourced by the federal government (Lo Bianco 1998a). States and territories have taken up further resourcing less consistently, but strong initiatives in ESL provision in schools have taken place across Australia. With the announcement in 1998 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (DEETYA 1998),[1] there has been a fundamental shift in federal government strategy that has moved ESL learners out from the mainstream of educational intent. Rather than enabling ESL learners, through targetted funding, to enjoy the same educational opportunities as others, the government is 'outstreaming' ESL learners by insisting that they pass a set of literacy tests prepared according to the expected pathways of growth of another set of learners in the population.

This chapter explores the underlying ideology of the National Literacy Plan and its implications for ESL learners in schools. The effects of these policy changes in relation to ESL programs in Australian schools are not yet empirically researched, since these policy changes are relatively new and in the process of implementation. This chapter therefore looks towards the consequences of similarly positioned standards-based reform in England and the United States of America on the education of ESL learners in schools.

The policy context of the National Literacy Plan – past and present

Much has been written about language policy changes and their impact on the ESL program in Australian schools. Australian school ESL policy has moved from a much feted inception under the federally funded Child Migrant Education Program in 1970, through relatively well resourced years, to the current and sudden diminishing resource context of the National Literacy Plan (see for example Moore 1995b; Lo Bianco 1998a; Michell 1999). Even in the well resourced years, conflicts between federal and state responsibilities left major gaps in funding for post-arrival provision in some states, as contests for funding responsibility continued. Michell (1999) refers to Painter's 'arm's length federalism' (1998: 54–5) which is characterised by adversarial rather than cooperative behaviour in these arrangements. This adverserial situation continues today, with unresolved tensions leaving inequitable funding across states for ESL, depending on the willingness of the state to supplement federal funding for ESL provision in their state.

The language policy environment in Australia has changed in ways that have both enabled and reflected these administrative changes. The *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) was a policy document to which language professionals contributed, and one which promoted both English and community languages as a personal and community asset within the context of multiculturalism. The policy provided a strong rationale for the continuing presence of ESL programs in schools, though could not influence the continuing stand-off between the federal government and some states on aspects of funding responsibility.

Only four years later, a subsequent language policy was prepared by the federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training in what was generally felt by educators to be undue haste after the success of the *National Policy on Languages*. The new policy *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) caused concern for many educators; it clearly and uncompromisingly shifted the rationale for the learning of English and languages away from a community and multicultural perspective towards an economic one; English and language learning were supported because of their value for Australia's internal and external economic wellbeing. At this time plans were also rapidly being put in place and executed by states for the development of sets of nationally agreed outcomes-based statements for nominated key learning areas; thus a common national understanding for curriculum was being established for the first time in Australia.

In the nomination of learning areas, ESL was not given key learning area status, but was seen as a subset of English. As an indication of the not yet diminished importance of ESL, a set of *ESL scales* (Curriculum Corporation 1994) outlining ESL learning through a series of outcomes-based stages was commissioned by the state and federal Ministers of Education. Writers have discussed the differences between the *ESL scales* and another prominent set of ESL profiles prepared under the previous policy, the *NLLIA ESL bandscales* (McKay, Hudson & Sapuppo 1994). It has been argued that, to some extent, each document reflects the philosophical directions of the policy under which it was created (Moore 1995b). ESL educators saw, for example, in the commencement of the *ESL scales* at level zero (suggesting the child to be a blank slate without English), the loss of recognition of the ESL child's linguistic and cultural background; they perceived the subsequent lack of reference to a bilingual interface in the processes of development of the child's English as deeply worrying. This was in comparison to the position taken within the *NLLIA ESL bandscales* which recognised and built on the child's linguistic and cultural background in its descriptions of the growth of the child's English in the context of schooling.

With the election of a new federal government in 1996, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* effectively expired, although the economic rationale for English and languages remained. A new policy move followed in which *literacy* became the central rhetorical tool. The National Literacy Plan was introduced in 1997 without a contextualising policy statement. Thus, the goals and statements in the National Literacy Plan became, by default, the new written policy following a course in which policy was determined as action, focusing on questions of how, rather than what, whether or why (Michell 1999: 8).

> These developments indicate that explanatory elements of literacy policy, where they exist, have been displaced or downgraded by action elements. This means that policy understandings about key language and literacy issues, which once provided explicit reference points for action before implementation, may only be applied, if at all, in the course of implementation. (Michell 1999: 7)

Literacy benchmarks accompanied by a testing regime were planned, tied to a regime of accountability and funding. In addition other administrative changes occurred around the same time as the National Literacy Plan. Seventy per cent of previously targetted funding to states under the (now named) Child ESL Program was 'broadbanded'. That is, a large proportion of previously targetted ESL funding was now allocated under more broadly encompassing literacy programs, and states (and schools) were accountable for this funding in terms of literacy for all learners, regardless of background. This highly strategic move from targetted ESL provision to broadbanded literacy provision was made possible because of the absence of a policy statement outlining a definition of and commitment to, ESL. ESL therefore became subsumed under literacy in post new-arrival funding. Lo Bianco (1998a) and Michell (1999) have both written about the centrality of broadbanding to the successful systematic 'withering' of the ESL program.

Since other countries in the Western world have undertaken parallel though not exactly similar steps in educational reform processes which have impacted on their ESL provision (see for example McKay 1999 for a comparison of reform and its consequences on ESL students in Australia and the United States), we might consider the consequences for ESL in Australia of this fundamental policy shift that has occurred suddenly and dramatically in recent ESL policy history, and draw on experiences in other countries where changes have been introduced earlier and are already being documented.

ESL learners in Australia

ESL learners are those learners who come from non-English speaking backgrounds who are learning English as they progress through school. Fifteen per cent of all children in Australia (20 per cent in Victoria and almost 25 per cent in the Northern Territory) are from language backgrounds other than English (Kipp, Clyne & Pauwels 1994 cited in Lo Bianco & Freebody 1997: 50–1). Most non-English speaking background (NESB) students are in need of language and/or cultural support from ESL specialists or ESL-informed mainstream class teachers, whether they are at beginning or more advanced levels of English language proficiency.[2] Masters and Forster (1997: 20) found that, overall, students from a language background other than English on average have lower English literacy levels than students from English speaking backgrounds. Cahill (1996) has reported similar difficulties for ESL learners. It is self-evident, therefore, that the implications of the National Literacy Plan are directly relevant to ESL learners who make up a significant proportion of students in Australian schools.

Literacy benchmarks and the National Literacy Plan

In Australia, in March 1997, Commonwealth, state and territory education ministers released the National Literacy Plan (DEETYA 1998) in which it stated the following national literacy and numeracy goal (p 7), agreed to by all state and territory education ministers:

> That every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.

A sub-goal was:

> That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

The plan included the following elements:

- the development of agreed benchmarks for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, against which all children's achievement in these years can be measured;
- the measurement of students' progress against these benchmarks using rigorous state-based assessment procedures, with all Year 3 students being assessed against the benchmarks from 1998 onwards, and against the Year 5 benchmark as soon as possible;
- progress towards national reporting on student achievement against the benchmarks, with reporting commencing in 1999 within the framework of the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia.

The literacy benchmarks were developed centrally by the federal government in consultation with states and territories, literacy experts and professional associations. The benchmarks are short statements of minimal achievements in reading, writing and spelling 'expressed in plain, accessible English, clearly understandable by a community audience' (DEETYA 1998: 21). They are accompanied by 'professional elaborations' to 'assist teachers and other education professionals to assess and report student progress against the Benchmarks' (p 21).

The states and territories have incorporated test items reflecting the literacy benchmarks in statewide tests. At present states and territories have control over test item development (incorporated into their current tests if possible) and the collection of data. Plans to introduce a common national testing program 'to enable reliable data to be collected against the Benchmarks' were mooted by state ministers of education in 1999 but have not yet been put in place. Funding for the development of the benchmarks, for professional development and for research 'to support national literacy and numeracy goals' accompanied the National Literacy Plan; government and non-government authorities were required to prepare a detailed plan outlining how these funds will be used to achieve measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes' (DEETYA 1998: 10).

Provision for ESL learners in the National Literacy Plan

Since the National Literacy Plan is inclusive of all children (DEETYA 1998: 7), there is no special provision in the benchmark descriptions for the pathways of literacy development of ESL learners and other non-mainstream learners.

ESL learners are, however, recognised in an accompanying section: 'Contextual framework for the National Literacy Plan'. This section briefly reviews research and literature around issues of diversity of experience and achievement. It refers to recent research which has shown that different groups of students, including students whose home language is not English, 14-year-old boys, and students of lower socioeconomic status, have tended to achieve mastery at considerably lower levels than other students (ACER 1997a, 1997b cited in DEETYA 1998: 13). There is therefore a recognition of the diversity of backgrounds and needs. There is also a stated adoption of the term 'at risk' which implies a commitment to provide support when it is most needed, not a deficit view of students, nor a labelling and consequent reduction of expectations for students, who, apart from the particular reasons for the 'at risk' identification, will be capable of significant levels of achievement.

Thus, ESL students are identified, with other students, as being 'at risk' according to their achievement against the benchmarks, rather than through considerations of second language status. The lack of identification of ESL learners as different from any learners 'at risk' continues in the 'professional elaborations' accompanying the benchmarks, in which even in more detailed statements to teachers, no reference is made to the likelihood of different pathways of literacy achievement by (and therefore differential teaching of) ESL learners.

There are some immediate and obvious responses that can be and have been made to the literacy benchmarks, and these relate to the concern of the subsequent 'outstreaming' of ESL learners that is occurring through monitoring strategies now used for the achievement of excellence in our schools (McKay 1998a, 1998b). The literacy assessment of ESL learners against a mother-tongue English pathway is inappropriate, and this inappropriateness is immediately evident to most within and outside the teaching profession.[3] Many ESL learners begin school with little or no English; many more arrive in our schools, including secondary school, as migrants or refugees at later age levels. (See McKay & Scarino 1991 for a map of ESL pathways.) English mother-tongue students come to school with five years of English, and continue to steadily improve their command of English, both social and academic, within the context of a broad community and curriculum experience in their first language. The assessment of the first group against the expected achievement of the second is clearly invalid, and pedagogically inappropriate.

The range of proficiency of ESL learners is broad and those who are operating at more advanced levels of proficiency, with high levels of control over accuracy (in particular), will be more likely to achieve the levels described in the literacy benchmarks. The implications of the use of the literacy benchmarks on ESL learners will therefore vary. The following, though, are implications:

- invisibility of ESL learners and of their particular learning pathways and needs: administrators and teachers will not see their ESL learners as different from English mother-tongue students or as needing differential teaching and support;
- loss of expertise and understanding amongst teachers: if funding and professional development are targetted towards all students meeting the English mother-tongue literacy benchmarks, there will be an imperative to teach ESL students 'more of the same', that is, teach them in the same way as the English mother-tongue students to meet the standards in the benchmarks;
- negative impact on the self-efficacy of ESL students who may be achieving as expected, and indeed exceptionally well according to ESL pathways;
- negative impact on parents who may receive, in error, the message that their children are failing;
- negative impact on parent choice of schools (and a resulting negative attitude towards ESL children in a competitive environment) if ESL children are seen to be failing and lowering published 'league table' results.

Research into second language learning in schools has shown that it takes up to seven years for ESL learners to reach age-equivalent proficiency levels in academic English (Collier 1987, 1989; McKay 1997). Lower levels of formal skills in English listed in the benchmarks, particularly related to form, do not necessarily preclude ESL students from participating very successfully in mainstream academic learning.[4] Testing of literacy of ESL learners on an English-mother tongue benchmark will give negative and inappropriate feedback to teachers, parents and learners.

The federal government's counterargument that all students must undertake a common test in order that the needs of students at risk can be identified and addressed has some merit at a surface level consideration of funding allocation. We are reminded by the Citizens' Commission for Civil Rights in the United States that a full data collection of *all* learners is essential if pockets of underachievement amongst disadvantaged learners are to be avoided (Yu & Taylor 1998). Yet, as I will argue, without careful and targetted attention to the educational needs of ESL learners in the action plans, and without proper action surrounding the collection and use of the literacy data in relation to ESL learners, the impact of the benchmarks on ESL learners may be severe in the personal, social and academic spheres of their lives.

In the following section I address the ideology behind the National Literacy Plan and examine the broader intent of this ideology as it is being perceived by educational commentators in Australia and the United Kingdom.

The ideology underpinning the National Literacy Plan

Other writers in this publication have examined the neo-liberal reform agenda in education. It is this agenda that is fuelling the introduction of the Australian National Literacy Plan. The tenets of the neo-liberal agenda, followed by many Western democracies in recent times, are to follow economic rationalist-motivated, market-based strategies to achieve their aims. These involve:

- new alliances with big business and industry;
- adoption of business notions of product accountability;
- the use of the language of management and accountability;
- discourses of crisis;
- a policy of economic restructuring to meet this 'crisis', and accompanying this, action in response to pressures of the global market;
- promotion of competition;
- a move from collective to individual social responsibility, that is, promotion of the individual and individual choice;
- pursuit of skill formation as a basis for individual development and opportunity.

These principles are transposed to education so that there exists, in the federal government's dealings with states, and the states' dealing with schools and parents and children:

- a perceived need to retrain and refit the labour force (to meet needs of the global market and to be internationally competitive);
- notions of 'product accountability' – achievement of the product, competencies, measurable outcomes (promoted because they are orderly, organisable, predictable, have a 'taxonomic propensity' and are therefore manageable) are set

according to administrators' requirements rather than teachers' knowledge of needs and pathways;

- accountability based on bureaucratic and consumer, rather than professional, criteria;
- devolution of responsibility for meeting specified outcomes (for the 'process') to teachers and students;
- user choice and user pays – competition between schools gives choice to parents – a competitive market will lead to excellence.

Broadfoot (1996: 22) describes the changes as having moved education:

> ...towards an increasingly technicist value-orientation to conceal the underlying power relations inherent in educational policy and practice. This latter development is taken to be a further stage in that pursuit of rationality which is characteristic of industrial societies. A technicist value-orientation...requires that those judgements which lie at the heart of any assessment procedure are transformed from being evaluations of an individual's qualities or achievements made against a more less personal, value-laden set of chosen criteria into evaluations in which the criteria are apparently the absolute dictates of scientific efficiency.

The changes have resulted in governments taking control of programs but rendering the curriculum assessment-driven, narrow and uniform and unresponsive to change and diversity. As Pusey states: 'What governments want most is less complexity and more governability' (Pusey 1981: 9 cited in Moore 1996c: 38). Consequences have also been the deskilling of teachers as they become closely monitored through accountability (Broadfoot 1996: 36); loss of professional knowledge; loss of understanding of learning as a process of growth characterised by qualitative (as opposed to incremental) change in learners (Moore 1996c); loss of skills and understanding of different needs in learning; and loss of opportunities for professionally grounded insights and critical reflexivity as teachers struggle to meet standards.

There are further consequences in the wider social context which are disturbing for minority and disadvantaged groups. Some commentators suggest that underlying the neo-liberal agenda is an intent to promote traditional privileges and entrench vested interests, and education is the medium through which traditional values and privilege can best be entrenched (Broadfoot 1996: 28). The use of standards and common assessment helps to establish 'a kind of symbolic power that asserts the inevitability, the "naturalness" of particular patterns of social inequality' (Luke, Lingard & Green 1999: 11).

Cultural relativism lies behind the advocacy for individualism in the political package. Within this framework, all social groups are presumed to have a formal parity with each other. In consequence, '[t]he matter of ethnic identity is understood in terms of individual choice and preference – the language of the shopping mall' (Olneck 1989 cited in McCarthy 1993: 291).

Luke, Lingard and Green (1999: 22) suggest that what is happening is a strong backlash against multicultural and multilingual populations. The construction of literacy as monocultural literacy becomes a tool to 're-imagine the diasporic and multicultural character of the Australian community'. Thus, rather than ESL learners finding themselves outstreamed by the literacy benchmarks by an accident of the introduction of standards-based reform, they are there because the political package, of which the benchmarks are a part, needs this to happen.

Some commentators, such as Omni and Winant (1993: 7), go further and suggest the encouragement towards relativism in viewing ethnicity (and I would add, 'ESL-ness') is racist in its undertones:

> It is now possible to perpetuate racial dominance without making any explicit reference to race at all. Subtextual, or 'coded' racial signifiers, or the mere denial of the continuing significance of race, may suffice.

Since the federal government in Australia is following the lead of other Western countries, particularly England, in the introduction of neo-liberal educational reform, I now turn to similar educational policy directions in England and then to comments on the impact of these directions on ESL learners in that country.

Policy directions in England and their implications on ESL learners

Educational reform began in England as early as the 1970s. After several years of committees working with a discourse of crisis and 'falling standards', national monitoring of standards began in the 1980s with the publishing of examination results on a comparative, authority-wide basis. In 1987, the government introduced the national curriculum with attainment targets at 7, 11, 14, 16 designed to raise standards further (Broadfoot 1996).

> The range of attainment targets should cater for the full ability range and be sufficiently challenging at all levels to raise expectations, particularly of pupils of middling achievement who frequently are not challenged enough, as well as stretching and stimulating the most able. This is a proven and essential way towards raising standards of achievement. (Department of Education and Science 1987: 9–11 cited in Broadfoot 1996: 209)

These national curriculum targets are age-related and based on expectations of English mother-tongue students. A number of changes in the administration of schools have accompanied these changes including greater financial control of local authorities, formal provision for greater parental choice in school selection, and community representation through very much more powerful school governing bodies (Broadfoot 1996: 214). League tables have been published in the media reporting on schools' achievement promoting competition, and teacher training has been revamped, including, more recently, the introduction of employment-based training.

Teachers' promotion is to be based on national standards to be issued by the government to heads and governors (Barnard 1998).

Through the recent introduction of a mandatory inspected Literacy Hour (a daily hour when all teachers must teach literacy) in all primary schools as part of a national literacy strategy (DFEE 1998a), the government has taken more control of teaching processes. Prescribed objectives are listed for each year level (word level work; sentence level work; text level work) and these relate to the performance pathways of mother-tongue English learners.

Use of the media and national testing results helps the government to control recalcitrant schools. Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, in the *Times Educational Supplement* (Clare 1996) tells educators that '...a stubborn two per cent of schools...comprehensively fail to give their children an acceptable standard of education'.

The government in England has therefore travelled a long way down the road of educational reform. A range of strategies is being used to control the curriculum, including financial control of authorities, introduction of school boards, teacher training changes, and tight assessment and inspection. Broadfoot (1987: 216) observes that educators are no longer at the centre of decision-making in education:

> Educational priorities are now increasingly being defined at the greatest possible distance from the chalkface - among the professional administrators of the DES [the Department of Education and Science], the professional test-constructors in their consortia, the exam boards and, above all, politicians.

Ten per cent of students in English schools are bilingual, with 200 languages other than English spoken by pupils. Ethnic minority children continue to be reported as disadvantaged, and exclusion from school, particularly for black children, is up to 15 times more likely (Thornton 1998). Competitive funding arrangements exist under a new Standards Fund grant called the Ethnic Minority Achievement grant to 'reflect the government's commitment to ensure that the education service provides genuine equality of opportunity for all minority ethnic groups' (DFEE 1998b: 1).

The grant is designed to 'raise standards of achievement for those minority ethnic groups who are particularly at risk of under-achieving' (DFEE 1998b: 1). There is some uncertainty and instability in the programs, with competitive bidding for funds for ESL causing some tensions across authorities – those authorities with high numbers being able to demonstrate higher need. Short-term contracts for ESL staff, often peripatetic, mean low status and low qualifications for ESL teachers.

As in Australia, all learners in England must study within and be assessed against the national curriculum, since all are 'entitled' to the national curriculum. ESL educators express concern of the lack of reference to ESL in the national curriculum documents. Sofer (1995: 276) comments that:

> ...[s]ince bilingualism and EAL [English as an Additional Language] are

> barely mentioned in the National Curriculum document for England, there is a perception of a lack of national concern or interest in this area of work which, in some local education authorities and schools, is central to the issue of raising standards.

ESL teaching is subordinate to the core learning of the national curriculum with no separate provision for ESL teaching permitted, or condoned by many educators. (See Levine (1990) for a discussion of 'partnership teaching' which has been introduced to assist mainstream ESL teaching.) From an Australian perspective, the lack of acceptance, even amongst some ESL educators, of short-term intensive provision for newly arrived students is puzzling, since the value of a separate but curriculum-integrated six month introductory course is well recognised and consistently funded in Australia. (Broadfoot (1996: 39) has pointed out that colonising of teachers' attitudes is part of the neo-liberal agenda.) Government's increasing control of teacher training has also resulted in ESL no longer being a permitted option in teaching qualifications in England (Sofer 1995: 276).

Literacy Hour materials, written according to literacy expectations of English mother-tongue students, suggest that the teaching of ESL learners should be done through 'differentiation' (DFEE 1998a: 96), the main options of which are to: -

- follow Literacy Hour, but reduce the amount of whole class time to allow for more group time;
- increase the time to allow for more group teaching while retaining the same level of whole class work – this takes more curricular time and may affect the balance of teaching time for other subjects;
- make use of an additional adult to provide simultaneous teaching or support during the Literacy Hour; and
- set or stream learners across a number of classes – this is possible in some circumstances, but it is important to take care to ensure that setting does not lower the expectations of what low attainers and children with other special needs can achieve.

ESL learners must be accommodated at the process rather than content level, and teachers are expected through manipulation of processes to help ESL learners meet the standards and to be accountable for doing so.

Many Local Education Authorities have developed their own English language competence stages as the basis for judging need and allocating funding but, unlike in Australia, there has been no nationally collaborative work on ESL stages because there has been no national funding or encouragement for such work (Sofer 1995; Leung 1996). A common ESL assessment tool has been called for (Leung 1996), and ESL educators look to Australia as a source of research and materials development in their area. Despite these difficulties, there are many stories of high standards of ESL provision at the local level (see for example SCAA 1996).

The reported impact of the reform agenda on the education of ESL learners in England

A major result of the introduction of standards-based reform in England has been unevenness of achievement. Gillborn and Gipps (1996: 80) report that '...while overall GCSE performance has risen, in many cases the gap has increased between the highest and lowest achieving groups'. They report on 'differential effectiveness', that is that some schools are especially effective for certain groups but relatively ineffective for others (p 3). They advocate 'multi-level modelling', a statistical procedure that attempts to unravel the different elements that might affect pupils' performance, including social class, gender and ethnic origins, as a way to tease out the difference between achievement and progress. Gibborn and Gipps (1996: 3) state that: '...it is possible for a group to make relatively greater progress, yet still emerge with lesser qualifications (if they started with lower previous attainments)'.

Blair and Bourne (1998), following a brief to research schools where ethnic minority students were achieving well, found many schools scored well in the league tables, but none which they could consider to be successful schools for ethnic minority students. They warn that: '"league tables" results could mask substantial underachievement by some minority ethnic groups within what were on the surface apparently successful schools' (p 23).

Parent choice and league tables have precipitated 'white flight' in some inner city schools. Some of these schools are now populated by 95 to 100 per cent ethnic minority pupils. Sofer (1996) suggests that the 'discourse of crisis', which causes deficiency views of ESL learners and the lower league table results for schools with ESL learners, ignores the fact that many children catch up over time. Sofer gives this example:

> In Tower Hamlets we have come from very far back indeed. In 1989 our children tested at 10, had an average reading score of six points below the average for London. In 1995 they were only two points behind an average which had itself slightly improved. This is a 25 per cent increase in six years.

It is not possible to claim that ESL children's extraordinary progress (as for example in Tower Hamlets) is due to the introduction of standards or to a usual acceleration of progress as ESL children settle down and are well taught in school. Their positioning outside the mainstream of educational intent is, however, clear enough.

Thus the evidence points to the fact that the use of mother-tongue English based expectations in standards together with other educational reform processes has continued to cause the outstreaming of ESL learners (and their teachers) in English schools. The question will remain with Australian educators of ESL learners as to whether these effects are inevitable in Australia. Since the ideology behind the standards-based reform in English and Australian schools is similar, Australian educators must take cognisance of the developments in England, and look for ways to avoid the worst consequences for ESL learners.

Counteracting the negative impact of reform on ESL learners

A brief look at the Title I program in the United States (see for example US Department of Education 1996) gives some guidance as to how the impact of reform packages on ESL learners might be lessened by governments.

The United States federal government's Title I program is designed 'to help children who are at risk of school failure to significantly improve their achievement of the high academic standards expected of all children' (US Department of Education 1996: 1). The role of the federal government is to assure equality of opportunity in public education; although public education is largely a state and local concern. Title I is one of the largest early education programs serving nearly 10.5 million students in some 50,000 schools (Yu & Taylor 1998: 5).

States and school districts in the United States receiving funds do the following:

- Set high standards that all students, including low-income and limited-English proficiency students, must meet in all subjects.
- Develop new assessments that measure the progress of students, schools, and school districts in meeting high standards.
- Hold school districts and individual schools accountable for showing continuous improvements in student performance, until all students achieve at high levels.
- Target resources to schools and districts with the highest concentrations of children from low-income families.
- Encourage school-wide improvements in schools where more than half the children are from low-income families.
- Ensure that eligible schools and districts have the capacity to teach to high standards, including adequate professional development and, where necessary, the provision of extra resources to needy schools. (Yu & Taylor 1998: 5)

The Title I program is very much a standards and accountability-based program. According to the Citizens' Commission for Civil Rights (Yu & Taylor 1998: 23) the program, despite 'roadblocks' appearing during the trial implementation phase of the program, is achieving some success for disadvantaged children.

> ...[n]ow, after three years under Title I, and assisted by initiatives catalyzed by Goals 2000, the New American Schools program, and state reform efforts, the number of school success stories is steadily increasing. Numerous school improvement programs have begun to 'scale up', bringing reform to hundreds, rather than just a handful of schools. Entire districts are beginning to implement reforms based on research about effective schooling for disadvantaged students.

There are several features of the Title I program which give useful insights into how to aim for more positive impact on ESL learners of a reform agenda. Space allows the highlighting of only five strategies that could be introduced in Australia to assist ESL teaching and learning in a reform program (for more discussion see McKay 1999).

- **Naming and making visible ESL, ethnic minority and economic disadvantage**

  Title I names and describes ESL, ethnic minority and economic disadvantage as targets for improved standards. These groups are highly visible targets for support and are not 'outstreamed' in the US federal government's policy determination or in its policy rhetoric.

- **The use of widely based curriculum performance standards**

  The performance standards in the intent of the Title I program are defined as standards to be achieved across a range of curriculum areas, according to the curriculum of the state. With the use of a broader set of performance standards, the range of errors and gaps in language and cultural knowledge of ESL learners that are evident as part of the natural second language development process may be less crucial to passing a standard than in a narrowly defined (English mother-tongue) literacy standard.[5] This will depend on a range of factors including the judicious selection of accessible cultural content in texts, and the privileging of criteria related to topic knowledge, evidence of critical thinking and other higher level skills, over those relating to form.

- **More flexibility of timing and content of state-based assessments**

  Title I provisions are flexible at the state level in that tests must be administered 'at least once in grades 3–5, in grades 6–8, and in grades 9–12' rather than in specific year levels. Within-state analysis must be made of results on comparable within-state tests which are based on state-regulated curriculum. Therefore national commonality in timing and content being pursued vigorously in Australia is not required in the United States. This reduces the power of the federal government to create competition for resources amongst states, allows for more flexibility at the state (and then possibly school) levels, and reduces the federal government's chance for a constraining control of the curriculum.

- **Pursuit of validity in assessment**

  The intent of the Title I program is for accommodations (such as, more time, access to dictionaries) to be used in assessment of ESL learners, and for testing to be carried out in the learner's first language. Whilst this has not always happened in the interim period (Yu & Taylor 1998), the move signals a recognition of the need for some kind of provision for ESL learners in standards-based testing. Research has been funded in the United States to investigate the usefulness of different types of accommodations for ESL learners (see for example Butler & Stevens 1997).

- **Finely tuned disaggregation**

  Title I requires that finely tuned disaggregation be carried out on the data collected on achievement. The Citizens' Commission emphasises the importance of this requirement, without which a less demanding curriculum may result for disadvantaged students who become hidden in groupings of the statistics of more successful students. This result has already been observed in English schools, as I have reported above. The importance of careful analysis of data is emphasised by other writers. Gillborn and Gipps (1996: 3) in England recommend disaggregation (or ethnic monitoring) must include socioeconomic status, since 'social class is widely found to be strongly associated with differences in pupil progress' (Gillborn & Gipps 1996: 3). Disaggregation by non-English speaking background (see for example Masters & Forster 1997) is too broad and hides the reality of the variability that exists amongst ethnic groups as amongst all people (McCarthy 1993).

Whilst we can draw on these strategies to point to ways to alleviate the negative impact on Australian ESL learners in this standards-based approach to reform, we must recognise that there are inherent tensions for pedagogy when high-stakes, accountability assessment is carried out for administrative purposes which are impossible to avoid. Brindley (1998) maintains that when the two purposes compete, the administrative purpose will inevitably win out. In the absence of a language policy, the stated intent of equity – with the naming and making visible of ESL, ethnic minority and economic disadvantage in an action document such as the Title I program – helps to make assumptions and intentions explicit. The National Literacy Plan in Australia has deliberately avoided such a clear statement; the intention would appear to be the weakening of the ESL program. The consequences are clearly that steps such as the appropriate selection of curriculum assessments, the pursuit of validity in assessment for ESL learners, and accuracy in reporting for this group, are unlikely to occur.

Conclusion

Continuing research is needed to investigate and document the effect of the literacy benchmarks on ESL learners in Australian schools. Comparative investigations of other systemic approaches to standards-based reform help us to understand the pitfalls as well as the possibilities. In the narrowly based literacy focused reform agenda, ESL needs to be recognised as different from 'literacy' (Lo Bianco 1998a). ESL pathways already identified in detail in Australia (see for example McKay, Hudson & Sapuppo 1994; Curriculum Corporation 1994) can be used to inform measurement of progress and teaching towards successful acquisition of English in the context of schooling. Qualitative research, such as case studies conducted by Gillborn and Gibbs (1996) 'highlighting the potential for school-based change' can be used to complement and counteract the rationalism inherent in the standards-based accountability measures.

Some further references to negative consequences for ESL learners in the reform process beyond those that have been discussed in relation to England serve to emphasise the points in this chapter. In Canada, Cumming (2001) reports on research

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which has observed that teachers of English, following an English literature standard, felt obliged to exclude ESL learners from English classes because the ESL learners did not have the level of English required to pass the standard. In England, Hatcher (1998: 488), like Blair and Bourne (1998), has written:

> ...one of the depressing findings is that the *relative* performance of the disadvantaged has remained similar even when the absolute performance of such groups has improved. (Mortimore & Whitty 1997: 9 cited in Hatcher 1998: 488)

Mortimore and Whitty suggest that any push for general raising of standards must be combined with a commitment to a reduction in inequalities.

> ...if the aim of 'school improvement' is to raise standards generally *without* also explicitly tackling inequality, then inequality will *increase* as standards rise... (Mortimore and Whitty 1997: 9 cited in Hatcher 1998: 488).

And finally, Blair and Bourne (1998: 24) ask in relation to the push for raised standards and better schools: 'In looking for "good schools" we clearly need to ask, "good for whom"?'.

In Australia, Cahill's comprehensive review of the ESL program within the context of a broader examination of Australia's schooling response to immigration and multicultural make-up has documented the travails facing the ESL program up to 1996, and has recommended, amonst other things, a comprehensive research and evaluation strategy (Cahill 1996: xvi). The findings and commentaries examined in this chapter indicate that the consequences of the National Literacy Plan, introduced since Cahill's report, together with the other changes documented in this chapter, are likely to add to the severe challenges facing ESL education in Australia. The result is that the need for research becomes even more urgent. The move towards language policy as action, without clarity of intent, and without provision for ESL learners in the action, has facilitated and will continue to facilitate the outstreaming of ESL. Without clarity of intent, even in an action document, unwritten assumptions gleaned from the supposed consequences of a national literacy plan give ESL educators little traction as they try to argue for improvement in ESL provision. It is difficult to interpret this in any other way than as an intended consequence.

Notes

1 In this chapter I will refer to the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan as the National Literacy Plan for ease of reference.

2 See for example *NLLIA ESL bandscales* (McKay, Hudson & Sapuppo 1994) for the descriptions encompassing the range of proficiency levels of ESL learners in schools, indicating that even at more advanced, less evidently ESL levels, many NESB students have language and cultural gaps which deserve teaching attention.

3 English-speaking background parents in a Parents and Citizens workshop in Brisbane in April 1999 petitioned the government about the lack of provision for ESL learners in the literacy benchmarks.

4 I asked a gathering of teachers to assess a piece of writing by a Year 10 ESL student which was clearly sophisticated in its conceptualisation and presentation of the Year 10 topic. The teachers agreed that the piece would not pass the Year 7 benchmark criteria because of second language related errors in form in the piece of work.

5 This point needs more investigation, as ESL personnel in England find the broader curriculum standards of the National Curriculum tend to cause outstreaming of ESL learners (Hugh South, ESL School Administrator, Department of Education and Science, pers. comm., 1999).

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11 Open for business: The market, the state and adult literacy in Australia up to and beyond 2000

Peter Kell

Introduction

Vocational education and training (VET) and adult literacy in Australia has been subject to a continuous process of unrelenting and profound change and reform over the past 15 years that has reshaped the character and nature of provision.

These changes have seen:

- The application of competitive tendering as a means of facilitating a 'training market' where private and public providers compete for state funds.
- The growth of private training providers in direct competition with public sector providers.
- Shrinkage for funding available exclusively to the publicly funded training system.
- The reorganisation and fragmentation of public administration of education into purchaser and provider groupings as a means of establishing internal markets based relations. This positions government as a 'purchaser' of training from a mix of 'providers' in a market where technical and further education institutions (TAFE) are only one type of host provider.
- The application of national competition policy to public providers with the notion of 'competitive neutrality' to develop a 'level playing field' for private providers and the option of 'regimes of access' to public resources for these private providers.
- The introduction of 'user choice' as a means of directing training funds to employers to select their preferred provider, the location, nature and timing of the training.
- A move from institutionally based training to site based enterprise level training which includes the development of flexible delivery options to meet the training needs of employers and employees in the workplace.

Accompanying these changes has been a shift away from the concept of civic and community benefit for the common good as the core rationale of education and training. The policy reforms initiated by successive Labor and Liberal governments at federal and state levels have displaced collective notions of purpose with a view that education is a commodity to be valued and purchased. The concept of a competitive training market has been the overall policy frame for Australian adult literacy and VET in the last 15 years of the twentieth century (Rein 1989).

This chapter is an exploration of the changing relationships between the state, the market and education using adult literacy and VET as a case study. While the discussion is highly specific to adult literacy many of the trends and shifts associated with marketisation and commodification have been experienced concurrently in the language field.

The chapter theorises the shifts in the notion of the state and its relationships with the market and education. The analysis concentrates on establishing linkages between the marketisation and commodification of education and training and the changing context and nature of adult literacy and VET teachers' work. The impact of these forces on the institutional settings, curriculum and the practice of teaching and learning is explored with the objective of critically analysing the instrumental and reductionist nature of reforms in Australia.

This chapter seeks to provide teachers and practitioners with a critical lens to view recent policy shifts and to provide an opportunity to identify the deficiencies and inadequacies of market based interpretations of education.

The limitations of the orthodox perspectives of current policy settings in an environment typified by diversity and complexity in local and global communities are discussed and several alternative approaches are proposed which link with Australia's rich linguistic and cultural heritage.

The state as a big 'idea'

The concept of the state is the key starting point of this exploration of policy in adult literacy and VET in Australia to provide a framework to interpret the changes to both the nature of the state and emergence of the market as the overall policy setting.

The notion of the state should be seen as a changing concept rather than as an immutable and static monolith. Bob Jessop has some very valuable insights into the process underpinning the changes that have typified the modern state towards the end of the twentieth century (Jessop 1990). Jessop argues that the state comprises two parts.

The first part is the regulatory, legislative, political and judicial infrastructure which are the functions that most of us are most familiar with. The second part is what Jessop terms the 'state projects' and the 'modus operandi' of the state that is characterised as state policy. This second part represents the mechanisms of state such as schools, hospitals and other institutions. Jessop has some interesting observations on how such functions are conducted and how their operations are influenced by social and political norms in the late twentieth century.

He suggests that there are three principle dimensions or interests of the state from which the actions of the state can be analysed. They are:

- The social bases of state power or the power blocs and alliances. These are the clusters of interest groups that are involved in brokering and managing the systems of the state.
- The state practices and projects which define the boundaries of the state and endow its internal unity. These are the regulatory, legal and administrative frameworks and their relationships to individuals and the community.
- The discourses which define the illusory community and its interests. These are the themes, symbols and ideologies that provide direction and a sense of unity, and mobilise support for the state.

Using this framework Jessop presents a more dynamic and discursive view of the state that suggests that 'the idea of the state is an idea'. This challenges the accepted wisdom that the state structures are monolithic and impervious to change. Jessop argues that the notion of the state is a dynamic concept subject to changes, negotiation and influence from various groups. Jessop links the production of state ideologies and imagery of the state with the practices involved in the regulatory and infrastructure activities. In this framework, policy discourses are crucial in representing the idea of the state and shaping the character of the projects and the allocation of resources of the state to favour specific interests. For example, in Table 11.1 several recent policy discourses such as 'mutual obligation' and 'back to basics' in education and training convey certain biases that favour and mobilise certain alignments of the state infrastructure.

Table 11.1 Mapping selected contemporary policy discourses, biases and linkages with hybrid projects

Policy discourse	Policy biases	Hybrid project
Mutual obligation	Transfer of obligation from state to individual	Voluntary 'work by the unemployed' in community sector
Back to basics	State allocates 'blame' for fall in 'standards' on teachers	Quantified testing regime operated by testing agencies
Truth in sentencing	State imposes control over individuals to protect community	Investment in prisons, police and legal infrastructure

Jessop sees the state as the mediated outcomes of political struggles that represent pragmatic compromises of powerful and dominant interests. These resolutions will incorporate 'institutional ensembles' and 'hegemonic projects' that are seen as the resolutions of political struggle over a strategic terrain. This simply means that the mechanisms of state will represent a form of consensus of powerful interests determined within a dynamic and changing social, political and economic environment. As mentioned earlier, the discourses associated with these political strategies will constitute the discourse of state, conveying biases and supporting certain interests. The example of the 'back to basics' theme favours established curriculum and testing techniques as a resolution to a perceived crisis in standards that privileges certain providers of curriculum and testing services.

Jessop also suggests the activities of state comprises an ensemble of 'hybrid state projects' that are the outcome of strategic and political alliances arrived at across often competing groups. There is always a temptation to see political and policy matters in polarised terms with the interests of some groups dominating but Jessop suggests the outcomes of hybrid projects represent a more complex and negotiated process.

Subcontracting the idea of the state

In the last 30 years we have seen the shift of a discourse about the state away from notions of civic and communal responsibilities in the context of national building towards a preoccupation about efficiency, effectiveness and conformity to the principles of the market. There has been a dramatic shift away from notions of public ownership in which the state occupies a steering role towards a residual and peripheral role for government in managing affairs of the state.

Governments no longer see their primary role as delivering services but as monitoring the provision of services that are subcontracted to providers to run services on behalf of the government. Increasingly it is the private sector and organisational hybrids, involving combinations of both private and public organisations, rather than the state itself which are involved in delivering services. In the context of what is termed the 'subcontracting state' (Hood 1989), the state itself is increasingly typified by 'hybrid projects' spanning and merging a diverse range of activities and organisations in the public and the private sector. In the education and training sector this has seen the emergence of new hybrid training enterprises which I discuss later in this chapter.

The retreat of the state to a monitoring role has been incorrectly represented as the collapse of the post war consensus, the death of Keynesianism and the end of the state by many right wing and some left wing political luminaries. In real terms there has not been a winding back of government but a subtle redistribution and siphoning of state revenues into the hands of the private sector. This has been done by simultaneously cutting back on public spending and reallocating it through a combination of the tax system, subsidies, depreciation allowances and export incentives. While there has been a winding back of functions conducted directly by government, there has not been a diminution in the quantum of state expenditure, rather there is a transfer in direction and orientation of that expenditure towards the interests of certain sections of business.

In the public education sector the processes of tendering for public resources has seen a redistribution of public funds into the private sector. Since 1996 funds in public schools have been diverted to private schools through the machinations of the enrolment benchmarking exercise introduced by the Howard government. Since the early 1990s the vocational education and training (VET) system in Australia has seen a gradual shift of resources away from TAFE, the state provider. The advent of the open training market and the implementation of 'user choice' have seen resources directed to employers and private training providers in competition with TAFE.

The privatisation of public education, under the guise of providing greater flexibility and public choice, has been an enduring policy discourse in the last 30 years and is linked to the increasing commodification of the lifeworld of individuals and communities (Habermas 1987).

Commodifying education

The privatisation of education has been facilitated by a dramatic shift in the relationship between the individual and the state. Public life has been increasingly characterised by the commodification of everyday life in a society increasingly preoccupied with consumption. In the west the political battles associated with class rivalries have been replaced by less passionate questions of consumption and the management of that consumption. Traditional political struggles associated with social solidarity and the quest for a fairer society have been supplanted by questions of individual choice, value and distribution in an acquisitive society. There is a new politics of desire, gratification, production, distribution and status that is reshaping the purpose of education and training.

From the nineteenth century until recently, education was seen as a mechanism for mediating class struggles and developing a consensus around social and political expectations of labour and capital. Education has been traditionally associated with a role in building social cohesion and nurturing loyalties to the nation-state. Education is now more associated with individualised choices about lifestyle, identity and status. More general notions of the civic and the communal purpose of education have been replaced by notions of exchange value which view education as a positional good to be bought in order to achieve future material security (Marginson 1997b).

In this context education is a vehicle to facilitate the attainment of personal acquisition of positional advantage through the accumulation of skills and qualifications. Broader views of purpose are obscured and educational organisations are increasingly in danger of being seen as nothing more than 'knowledge cafeterias' where participants are engaged in 'qualifications shopping' for 'really useful' knowledge and skills (Kenway 1995b; Marginson 1997b).

New and surprising developments illustrate the extent to which the new hybrid projects and ensembles described by Jessop are a response to the commodification of education and how they are reshaping the nature of teaching, the sites in which it is conducted and the notion of what 'useful' knowledge is.

By chance, my colleague Michael Garbutcheon Singh and I recently inspected a new housing development on the outskirts of Melbourne that is marketing affordable home and land packages in resort style lake developments. I was most surprised at the way in which this village development was being marketed because, unlike most developments where lakes, leisure, palms and golf courses were depicted as the salient features in sales and merchandising material, this development was very different. It was different because of the emphasis on 'lifestyle options' focused on opportunities in education and training. The multiple village development called 'Caroline Springs' involves the creation of an education precinct to meet the broad educational needs of children, adults and the aged through partnerships with education providers. This includes the building of a private school and linking it with a university campus and community providers.

The promotional material has photographs of residents of all ages at computer terminals engaged in on-line learning. The developers describe this as 'getting the learning habit' and provides 'opportunities to plug into education as part of their lifestyle' (*The Age* 11 November 1998 p 18). The planning and image management of this venture not only represents an interesting appropriation of the notion of lifelong learning but the creation of a new 'package' where identity, status, education, work, leisure and consumption are merged. It also provides a signpost to some of the emerging challenges arising from the commodification of education and training.

Caroline Springs is an excellent example of how education and training has been refashioned and crafted into new packages of individual consumption and choice rather than the fulfilment and embodiment of the civic, social and cultural values. Individual consumption and advantage rather than the formation of common good saturate the developers' message. The emphasis on collective and democratic notions of the purpose of education has been displaced by exchange relationships between a purchaser and provider where educational futures are guaranteed by new ensembles involving capital.

While the commodification of education is not novel, the Caroline Springs experience illustrates well the complexity of the new hybrid projects and ensembles that characterise education in the new millennium (Jessop 1990). It is not just the grafting of market principles onto existing patterns of education but a massive reorganisation of the deployment of capital which merges business finance, education, communications and consumption in new and novel patterns on a global scale. It is also a complete overhaul of how the public and private sphere is interpreted and how the individual, the state and the market interact.

Depoliticising the political

Part of this massive reshaping involves the redefinition of purpose towards more instrumental and utilitarian objectives. Jurgen Habermas has termed this as the emergence of the 'technocratic consciousness' where purpose is equated with arbitrary performance that lacks connection to a wider set of social norms and meanings (Habermas 1971). This thinking simplifies complex social and political questions into being merely the application of an appropriate technology. This 'technocratic consciousness' depoliticises problematic issues to become nothing more than getting the technology right – to get it 'fixed'. This orientation collapses broad policy issues into contrived and compartmentalised responses that lack connection with broader political, cultural and ecological meanings.

This depoliticisation of the public sphere where everything is simply viewed as a technological fix is also complimented by three tendencies which Habermas sees as contributing to the technisation and commodification of the public and private sphere. Habermas argues that public and social lifeworld have been colonised by tendencies towards juridification, quantification and monetisation (Habermas 1987). These tendencies can be summarised as follows:

- The tendency towards juridification of social and cultural life describes the way in which law-making and laws have been utilised to assign ownership and govern the behaviour of society to recognise and value ownership. This ensures that social interactions are increasingly subject to contractual and exchange relationships.
- The tendency towards quantification describes the way in which all phenomena and activities can be expressed, predicted and controlled by numerical representations. In expressing all activities in numerical and measurable terms, value can more easily be determined and applied to allocate value more precisely. This ensures that all aspects of the private and public sphere can be quantified, measured and valued.
- The tendency towards monetisation refers to the way in which interactions and activities in the public and private sphere can be valued and subject to an exchange relationship involving the exchange of money or other forms of storing value.

These three tendencies contribute to a depolitisation where complex dilemmas and tensions are collapsed into simple questions of value and consumption – of 'getting your monies worth'. More complex questions associated with norms and values remain silent as dilemmas and tensions are redefined as simply questions of consumption, value and choice in an exchange relationship. In such an environment the state becomes 'a sideline umpire' serving the market in which the individual is repositioned as a consumer or a client. There is evidence this new status as a client is triggering some resentment in recent electoral results in places like Victoria.

The restructuring of the state, the commodification of the public and private sphere and the technisation of the lifeworld have profoundly affected the policy settings associated with adult literacy, the nature of literacy, the institutional settings where literacy teachers work, and the work they do.

The marketisation of VET and adult literacy 1990–1998

Since the late 1980s the VET system and the adult literacy area have been subject to escalating levels of competition, marketisation and privatisation. Proposals for major reform in Australia's training system and adult literacy commenced in the late 1980s in an atmosphere of economic crisis and dwindling confidence in the state funded system to provide skilled workers capable of sustaining an export oriented and internationally competitive economy. During the 1980s the Hawke government chose to ignore the advice of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in the landmark report *Australia reconstructed. ACTU/DTI mission to Western Europe* and opted for the deregulation of the training system (DTI 1987).

The combined ACTU and DTI delegation recommended a revitalisation of the training sector with moves for closer linkages between the state, industry and unions in a similar manner to the Western European countries they visited. Instead of preserving the key role for the state in revitalising the training sector, the Labor government chose the path of deregulation, competition and the introduction of the open training market. Since the review into the training costs of industry restructuring (Training Cost Review Committee 1990), there has been a general policy bias toward a competitive training market comprising a mix of private and public providers. Successive policy settings, including the establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in 1992, have reaffirmed a deregulatory approach redirecting state funds into a training market. Until recently this cluster of policy settings remained the dominant framework for both the Labor Hawke/Keating governments (1983 to 1996) and the Liberal Howard government (from 1996) – with few variations.

These policy settings of the last 15 years can be divided into four distinct policy epochs associated with reform in VET and adult literacy in Australia (Kell 1998).[1] These epochs have witnessed the shift of provision from a 'poor cousin epoch' with trades based courses offered in a publicly funded technical system where literacy and language were viewed as a matter of 'improvement'. This epoch which occupied the first 74 years of the twentieth century closed with the introduction of the open training market which created a mix of public and private providers competing for government funds (Kell 1998). With the advent of a deregulated training system the focus of training has shifted from public to private provision and away from institutions to enterprises through the application of market based resource distribution. In the most recent 'epoch of user choice', state resources have been directly siphoned to employers and industry rather than state providers under the guise of increased client flexibility (Kell 1998).

Accompanying these shifts has been a reorientation of literacy from traditional forms of reading and writing towards meeting the needs of industry and enterprises for more efficient workplace communication. This instrumental view of literacy also witnessed an integration of literacy and language issues in the context of workplace communication through *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) in 1991. This watershed policy was crucial in reshaping the provision of literacy and language funds by, amongst other things, facilitating the funding of work based literacy and language programs through the Workplace English Language Literacy (WELL) program. More importantly the ALLP (1991) recognised the linguistic heritage and diversity in the Australian community and its contribution towards the economic future of Australia in a globalised world market where the possession cultural mastery and linguistic competence assumed new importance. In this context Asian languages assumed a new recognition and status in being able to provide a platform for entry into the emergent markets of the 'Asian tiger' economies.

The application of an instrumental economic policy framework in the policy epochs of Australian vocational education and training saw an increasing marketisation of that sector as well as adult literacy and language teaching with heightened levels of what Habermas (1987) describes as juridification, quantification and monetisation.

Juridification of education

The push towards competition has been juridified in the adoption of the National Competition Policy (NCP) that mandated the need for 'competitive neutrality' between state and private providers. Under the guise of instituting a 'level playing field' the concept of the 'regime of access' has provided private sector access to state resources. The legalistic framework of the NCP has provided the rationale to create the internal market dynamics of 'purchaser' and 'provider' in an industry not typified by competition until the early 1990s. The separation of operations within the state structures into 'purchaser' and 'provider' has abolished the homogenous relationship between the funding and delivery arms of the state undermining the ability of the state to mobilise a coordinated response to many emerging issues.

Orthodox economic theory argues that this separation of functions establishes the 'supply' and 'demand' variables necessary for a market to operate. This separation has functioned to launch successive rounds of restructuring in the public sector and has legitimised the transfer of resources between the state and the private sector. It has contributed to the fragmentation and duplication of effort and resources doing little to either increase the quantum of training or maintain current training infrastructure. Worse still there are few quality assurance procedures to protect vulnerable students. The sort of fiascos which accompanied the breaking up of the

Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) into the deregulated and privatised employment services have been repeated in adult literacy, a trend which suggests we are witnessing a policy and sectoral 'meltdown'.

Quantification and monetisation

A key feature of orthodox markets is the reduction of all activity to predictable and controllable measurable units of value. The allocation of unit value has been progressively achieved through the quantification of the measurement of educational processes and outcomes. The application of reductionist mathematical formulae such as student contact hours and the measuring of student performance in quantitative terms has the dual function of assigning quantitative value to activity and providing the basis of determining the unit value necessary for market conditions. The use of quantified measurements creates an impression of scientific objectivity that masks the political abuse of such measures in providing a platform to shift resources into the private sector.

The argument here is not against appropriate testing or benchmarking per se, nor against efficient management of resources, but a cautionary note on the utilisation of such measures to 'uncouple' the broad complexity of provision into expressions like digital rankings which further impoverish the capacity of the state to provide quality services. The quantification and monetisation of the work of educators is bewildering to professionals recruited into an era when social, cultural and communal outcomes were valued. The concept that education can be collapsed into a transaction and exchange relationship is bewildering and alienating.

The sense of despair is compounded by a sense of confusion about who the real client is in these new education markets. Is it the state that pays the bills? Is the state the client, or is it industry that wants skilled workers? Or is it the individual student who pays for the programs through fees and taxes? Under these poorly defined market conditions the challenge is to meet the often discursive demands of multiple markets and clients under the confines of multiple accountabilities.

The new hybrid institutional settings

The sense of confusion has been compounded by the progressive emergence of very different institutional settings for teaching and learning. The old state-run bureaucratic monoliths that characterised the state provision of education are staggering haltingly towards very different new hybrid learning enterprises. Increasing numbers of public training providers, including TAFE, are entering into strategic alliances and consortia with private providers described by Jessop. The emergence of the 'hybrid organisation' has blurred the boundaries between the concept of the private and the public organisation.

These new hybrid education providers involving multiple partners are typified by the development of independent business arms and shelf companies designed to increase corporate flexibility and profitability. In more extreme cases these business arms have the potential to facilitate the shifting of public funds into companies where differential employment conditions operate and student fees are deregulated (Kell, Balatti & Muspratt 1997).

Major challenges arise from the emergence of international alliances and partnerships involving the convergence of multinational corporations, global media and telecommunications organisations and educational providers. Lepani (1996) and Kenway (1995b) have identified the emergence of mega corporations that are reshaping training delivery by using sophisticated forms of integrated information technology. New alliances involving consortia of public providers and media giants like Foxtel are setting new standards in delivery. Similarly new international venture capital is financing such organisations as 'J & R educational media', 'Then' and 'Learning smith' that combine learning brokerage, on-line learning and adult education.

There are key questions about the role that these hybrid projects and their business arms have as vehicles for the de facto privatisation of state education services. There are dilemmas concerning the tensions associated with the differential responses in the commercialised context of the private sector competition and the requirements of broader responsibilities and accountabilities associated with the public sector roles. How these tensions are resolved in the context of escalating hybridity will be a key issue in education and training over the first ten years of the twenty-first century.

The new hybrid educational workers

The commodification of education and training ensures that the work of educational workers is also subject to fundamental and profound change. Not only have teachers' duties and expectations and trainers' roles been reshaped by the commodification of their work, but the organisational and workplace relationships that teachers have with their employing agents have been dramatically reshaped.

The role of education workers is split between meeting the demands of participating in education markets and delivering educational products needed for those markets. Marketisation has increased demands for teachers to be skilled brokers capable of negotiating and liaising the sale and delivery of educational products. These roles require acute skills in negotiation, project management and abilities in mapping existing resources into customised deliverables.

These new roles have not replaced the traditional roles and interpretations of teaching, rather these new roles have been 'bolted on' to traditional teaching. Rather than shifting to a new practice we are witnessing the emergence of a new hybridised education worker merging the roles of a teacher and a sales representative. This may be a stage in the evolution towards a new practice of teaching and learning but there are signs that these 'new' conditions do little to provide a platform for revitalising the profession.

The new forms of employment in the education industry are also being reshaped by education markets. The increased use of part time and contracted employment of staff by public and private providers on short-term contracts has been justified on the basis that ultimate flexibility is required to respond to new emergent markets. The careers of education workers are now typified by short-term 'serial' and simultaneous employment with multiple employers. Issues of corporate loyalty, commercial confidentiality and the difficulty of maintaining a strategic long-term corporate memory in specialist areas assume new dimensions where traditional professional values and loyalties are tested by the demands for a flexible workforce (Kell, Balatti & Muspratt 1997; Kell, Balatti, Hill & Muspratt, 1997; Kell 1998).

Technicising teachers' work

Teaching has been deeply affected by the 'technocratic consciousness' described by Habermas (1971) and has been represented in many Australian reforms as a narrow and reductionist activity. This reductionist view of teaching and learning has seen teaching as simply a technical and instrumental activity divorced from any social and cultural context. Reformist zealots, largely from narrow industry and government lobby groups have sought to develop reform programs that are largely 'teacher free'.

This is not a recent trend but the promise of the new learning technologies has heightened the expectation that teachers will adopt different roles such as coaches and mentors in servicing these new technologies. The role of teacher has been revisited to suggest the notion of 'VET practitioner', 'learning navigators' and 'learning facilitators' (Lepani 1995, 1996). This new terminology situates teaching in support of learning materials and other training staff, such as workplace trainers. The act of teaching is moving toward a support role where teachers work with others. This emergent role is another hybridization and has been accelerated by the withdrawal of funds from the state system forcing the adoption of cheaper forms of delivery under the broad banner of flexible delivery. There is a question whether these changes are driven by a commitment to student-centred learning or by the limitations of funding. The arrival of flexible learning in most instances is simply the cheapest option for delivery rather than any considered theoretical revaluation of learning theory that benefits learners.

The practice of teaching and curriculum development in VET and adult education has also been reconceptualised as an interaction with what is termed 'learning deliverables' in the jargon of the new learning technologies. These deliverables are predetermined generic curriculum and learning programs with defined learning outcomes. The introduction of training packages consisting of competency frameworks, assessment guidelines and learning materials represents the arrival of these learning deliverables in Australia. Interestingly, professional development and teaching and learning strategies remain unendorsed and presumably optional extras.

These packages and the general trend towards 'teacher free' programs can be seen as further attempts to deprofessionalise the role of teaching. On the other hand these learning deliverables, combined with opportunities for teachers to teach in new settings such as workplaces, offer some distinctly new possibilities. The move away from institutionalised learning and the pressure to generate curriculum might release teachers to take up quite different interventions in workplaces to change the lives of workers. While these possibilities are clearly emerging in recent programs, this requires immense skill by educators to map and match generic packages to the needs of enterprises and the learner. The ability to customise the generic deliverables is the key challenge for the new hybrid education worker in the context of a community typified by geographic, cultural and linguistic diversity. It is because no form of education can be seen as 'one size fits all', no matter what technology is used.

This might be seen as an unduly pessimistic assessment and may depress a profession already subject to change fatigue, but many of these changes are profound and irreversible and we cannot expect to retreat to things as though there was a nostalgic golden era.

Conclusion: Educational futures

There are gaps and interstices at the fringes of policy and practice where intervention and change is possible to revitalise and renew, democratic and inclusive forms of education. There are broadly three themes that may provide a framework for future practice. These themes are: new national/global projects, new strategies for teaching and learning, and the new global and local communities.

New national/global projects – a market free zone?

The state is alive and well and the struggles around the idea of the state continue to intensify even though the singular class based nature of former struggles for the state is diminished. Attempts by politicians to depoliticise certain issues and leave them to the market have not collapsed issues into simple questions of consumption. On the contrary the continued failure of economic fundamentalism has triggered a crisis around the responsibility of the state for the individual. The rise of the politics of resentment that has characterised elements of the emergence of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party and the defeat of some governments committed to privatisation now suggest that there is an urgency to reconnecting with the notion of the community and the rebuilding of a different type of nation-state.

This new nation-building will, however, require very different strategies since globalisation and the nature of multiculturalism will demand more sophisticated projects. Rampant jingoism runs the risk of reviving racism, fragmenting a multicultural community and creating alarm in the region as evidenced by recent developments in East Timor. Newer, more abstract and conceptual national projects have to provide a sense of collective unity to the outdated symbols of nation and those which the market has consigned to obsolescence. The emergent national projects infiltrate the arts, sports and cultural events and are exhibited in the frenzy over the Sydney Olympic Games and the associated jingoistic cultural carnivals that accompany such landmark media spectaculars (Kell 2000).

The point here is that nation-building was about major national projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, nationalising banks and the development of community infrastructure like railways and airlines. While this civic spirit needs to be revived for the good of the common wealth, the future national projects will be concentrated around more abstract questions about nation, identity and Australianness.

The role of language and literacy teachers is crucial in enabling people to apply new and existing tools to participate in the construction of the new symbols of nation and community that are not limited by racism, isolationism, envy and greed. In this new nation-state there needs to be a new form of civic pluralism which recognises the diversity of languages, symbols, rituals and text.

These sentiments are not helped by the commodity fetish surrounding education and training that simply sees it as little more than a positional good in an exchange relationship. This fetish emphasises different forms of individualised identity and lifestyle opportunities rather than connections with more diverse communal themes. The potential for a polarisation between those that can afford only the 'soup kitchen' education and those that can have the lavish 'deluxe model' will become apparent if the dictates of the market are unfettered.

The market has obscured and masked stark social inequalities making them appear the immutable and natural conclusion of competition. To avoid the politics of envy and discontentment, governments must preserve an interventionist role to ensure that the dictates of the market do not fragment and divide communities. Governments must also intervene to ensure that markets do not create a situation where the market actually devalues diversity justifying monoculturalism as the most economic and efficient outcome of the market.

Generating new national projects will require new strategies in teaching and learning that incorporate the negotiation diversity and civic pluralism.

An example of new strategies for teaching and learning – multiliteracies

Instrumental views of knowledge and teaching are inadequate in an increasingly dynamic, discursive and globalised communications environment. Current instrumental and static views of literacy which dominate recent attempts by Australian policy-makers to make literacy more relevant to the workplace fail to account for the multimodal and multidimensional aspects of literacy. Concentrating on narrow industry based work competencies does little to respond to the globalised forms of communication that now characterise fast capitalism.

The work of the New London Group explores notions of literacy that recognise the new modalities of language and literacy which include visual, graphic and spatial forms of communication. The application of a multiliteracies framework by members of the New London Group in Australia and South Africa highlights new strategies for organising teaching and learning that are inclusive of teachers and learners and respond to linguistic and cultural diversity (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2000).

The multiliteracies framework enables teachers and students to break out of the narrow confines of imposed and instrumental curriculum and to use the cultural capital of the students and their communities. A multiliteracies framework offers the promise of connecting with the new grammars, syntaxes and communications associated with local and global communities.

The theoretical framework associated with multiliteracies values interconnectedness, multiplicity and hybridisation and in doing so offers the possibilities of responding to the challenge of globalisation in a more productive and meaningful way.

The new global and local communities – a new idea for the state

The challenge of new futures will be focused on developing the strategic alliances and networks needed to participate in global and local settings typified by diversity and multiplicity. To participate in these new communities there is a new urgency in possessing the skills to access the multiplicity of discourses of language and culture. The politics of culture and identity occupy an increasing importance as the negotiation of meanings spans both local communities and those across the world. Negotiating difference assumes new proportions which reserves a crucial role for adult language and literacy teachers to negotiate dialect, register, semiotic, code switching, hybrid languages and cross-cultural discourses (Cope & Kalantzis 1995). These skills are universally transferable and equally relevant to those who work in and around Melbourne and Sydney as they are to those in Rio de Janiero, Kuala Lumpur and Damascus.

Australia with its rich linguistic and cultural heritage has an excellent platform from which to make linkages between local ethnic communities and their global counterparts. To capitalise on these advantages that multiculturalism gives Australia will require a different institutional response to diversity than the traditional assimilationist models that have facilitated monocultural organisational norms and values. Future strategies will require a complementarity that provides the organisation with the cultural and linguistic resources to participate in markets and activities where diversity is mediated. There is need to replace assimilationist organisational cultures with this concept of productive diversity if Australian organisations are going to fully participate in the globalised economy (Cope & Kalantzis 1997).

Only professional and well-trained adult educators with adequate resources can be the touchstone in creating the environment where these skills and capabilities can flourish. They will need the skills to integrate literacy and language needs and develop programs where the multiplicity of forms of communication is explored in expansive and creative ways beyond the narrow instrumentalism of Australian policy in the late twentieth century.

The challenge of the new futures needs to be faced with courage, tenacity and a sense of great commitment and passion for the profession of education. It will require a renewed strength after the debilitating and damaging impact of market based policy settings in education and training. Most of all there will need to be vigilance and scepticism about the claims of those asserting that the market is the way of the future.

Note

1 The four policy epochs are: The Poor Cousin Epoch: Technical Education and the Emergence of TAFE 1900–1974;

The Kangan Epoch: Participation and Equity 1974–1988;

The Epoch of the Open Training Market and the Seamless Web 1988–1992; and

The Epoch of the User Choice 1992–1998.

12 Inventiveness and regression: Interpreting/translating and the vicissitudes of Australian language policy

Uldis Ozolins

Of the many areas of language policy in Australia, only a few have seen the degree of innovation that has been demonstrated by the field of interpreting/translating (I/T). It is the field par excellence that has responded to the complexities of Australia's growing multilingualism and diverse communication needs. Yet this is an area that remains little noticed even by many interested in language policy.

In an oft-quoted remark, Jill Blewett (1988), one of the founders of I/T education and accreditation in Australia, claimed in the late 1980s that:

> Australia leads the world in the provision of community interpreting and translating services and in the regulation and training of interpreters and translators for that provision... In the culturally pluralist but English language dominated Australia of today, equal access to all services frequently for non native English speakers, demands the employment of bilingual professionals or the provision of interpreter/translator services, or both.

Major achievements of the area in the past three decades have included:

- a long-standing commitment by public authorities to provide language services for interaction between non-English-speaking background (NESB) clients and host institutions;
- the invention of the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) and the creation of numerous specialised language services;
- the establishment of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) to provide a unique model of I/T accreditation;
- a comprehensive approach to accreditation, provision and training including for Indigenous languages and Australian Sign Language (Auslan);

- high level I/T training in languages not normally covered in the education system;
- development of commercial I/T activities and some success in exporting these; and,
- more broadly, the provision of an overall model of response to communication needs now being in varying ways emulated in other countries with increasingly multilingual populations.

Among the numerous other areas of language policy discussed in detail in this volume, the field of interpreting/translating thus shows strengths in terms of commitment, innovation and flexibility, comprehensiveness and inclusiveness in its approach to the whole range of languages in Australia.

Equally importantly, but less commonly analysed, the I/T field reflects crucial aspects of Australian language policy over the past few decades both in terms of achievements and of vicissitudes. With I/T practitioners involved in so many institutions, I/T clearly shows the shifting ideologies both in the public and the private sphere that influence the work of language professionals and make problematic several aspects of language policy development to date.

In terms of vicissitudes, I/T as a field has encountered:

- threatened marginalisation and an insecure basis of support, as I/T often falls between the cracks of portfolio responsibilities and political and institutional support;
- a tendency to be neglected in some major thrusts of language policy;
- great difficulties in establishing a professionalism outside its traditional mainly public sector institutional basis;
- poverty, in terms of rewards for its practitioners, development of resources and support for research and professional advancement.

The genesis of I/T in Australia

Australia's massive post-war immigration scheme was not based on assumptions of developing a multilingual and multicultural Australia – far from it. Australia's immigration outlook at this time was dominated by views of assimilation. Non-English speaking background (NESB) migrants, starting with the Eastern European Displaced Persons in 1947, were accepted only when it was clear insufficient numbers could be attracted from Britain and Ireland to meet Australia's ambitious immigration targets. Australia had previously shown suspicion of non-British migrants, and demanded strict conformity to a monocultural and monolingual self-image. Wary of possible negative attitudes towards arriving NESB migrants, from 1947 the Australian government planned carefully for migrant intakes and engaged in considerable social and linguistic engineering. It carefully initiated a program of English teaching to immigrant adults, set up reception centres to provide short-term accommodation to newcomers, scattered the migrant population over the continent to pursue employment availability, and encouraged Australians on their part to foster assimilation and good-neighbourliness.

The immigration program thus demonstrated a crucial responsibility that was assumed by the government – if NESB migrants were to be brought to the country, it was the government's responsibility to help them linguistically; it was the government's responsibility to assist them to assimilate, rather than ignore their plight. Despite the assimilationist intent behind such a commitment, this fundamental assertion of responsibility was to have profound consequences, and stands in sharp contrast to the position of some other governments in nations of immigration who assert that fitting into the society is the individual migrant's own responsibility. As the immigration program continued and assimilationist objectives receded, this commitment was maintained and expanded into different service areas (Ozolins 1993). As a marked feature of the immigration intake has been its diversity, with no one group predominating, so responses have had to constantly account for new groups and languages.

It was in this context that I/T developed. Interpreters were used to select NESB migrants in Europe, and used in the reception centres. As migrants settled in the communities, individuals occasionally acted as interpreters in major institutions such as hospitals or with the police force. At this stage, providing I/T was perfectly compatible with an assimilationist outlook. Given that migrants were given opportunities to learn English and encouraged to assimilate, it was assumed that the need for interpreters would be ad hoc and short-lived.

These hopes of easy assimilation were dashed with growing concentrations of NESB migrants, and the clear preference of many migrants to continue to use and maintain their languages – factors ignored at first by Australian institutions, but becoming increasingly an issue by the late 1950s and 1960s. The fact that many migrants did not learn English well enough to be able to negotiate Australian institutions meant that the need for interpreters grew rather than diminished.

Language services

Martin (1978) has eloquently described the inability of many Australian institutions in the first two decades of post-war immigration to confront the real language needs they faced. Communication problems tended to be blamed on the migrant, and institutional responses were avoided as long as possible, and then met generally out of exasperation at sheer weight of numbers. If avoidance failed, then an interpreter of some kind was used. Interpreting was quite literally 'invented' in these circumstances.

To say that these practitioners invented interpreting is to point to both the innovative nature of the undertaking, and its largely unplanned and ad hoc institutionalisation. This was an inventive act also because this kind of interpreting was quite removed from the other main form of interpreting which was itself being institutionalised at this time – international conference interpreting, which had developed since World War I at international conferences and the League of Nations, but which now took a new form after World War II using simultaneous interpreting from booths, as introduced at the Nuremberg War Crimes trials. The body of practitioners which evolved to perform this interpreting were regarded as indispensable to international communication, accordingly being granted high status and rewards, and were seen as part of a vast infrastructure that supports international contact (Roland 1982).

The Australian interpreting scene differed markedly from the international arena, both in terms of techniques and of social contact. At the time Australia had hardly any conference interpreters (Kerr 1988). Rather than simultaneous interpreting from booths for international meetings, Australian interpreters were engaged in liaison interpreting. This occurred most commonly in three-corner situations where the interpreters conveyed messages while being physically present with the two parties, and conveyed messages in both language directions, as against conference interpreters who will often work into one language only (Gentile, Ozolins & Vasilakakos 1996). The interpreting in Australia was in direct contact with both clients, and very much on public view.

Further, interpreters in Australia were not regarded as skilled professionals in their own right. As in most cases they came from the minority language group themselves and were identified with the largely uneducated working class masses of post-war immigration. The majority of interpreters were not highly skilled and often reflected this in their broadly accented English and highly variable command of the other languages. Given this ad hoc nature of the occupation, in many cases there was a readiness to rely upon any bilingual staff to assist if needed (thereby equating speaking another language with being able to interpret) or use family members and friends, a practice of bring-your own-interpreter that has long continued (Ozolins 1991).

While some large hospitals appointed interpreters from the mid-1950s, a more organised institutional response to interpreting needs came only slowly. The Department of Immigration organised a Translation Section in 1960 to meet the mass of documentation that needed to be translated for settlement purposes. By the late 1960s and the greater realisation of the social impact of immigration, there were beginnings of criticism of then current provision and quality of language services, with social welfare organisations lobbying government on this issue. Along with concerns raised about the adequacy of education of migrant children, and about economic inequalities being experienced by migrants as a whole, the inadequacy of language services slowly came to be identified (Martin 1978).

Language services have continued to develop over the 1980s and 1990s, with some important shifts in emphasis that are discussed later in the chapter. The scope of the services can be gathered from a few simple figures: the Telephone Interpreting

Service in its peak years serviced over 300,000 telephone and on-site interpreting requests across the country; the NSW Health Care Interpreter Service, covering interpreters in all major health institutions, covers over 200,000 assignments a year; other major state services in health and other areas in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia handle assignments in the tens of thousands, as do the handful of larger private agencies (Ozolins 1998).

The Telephone Interpreting Service

Continuing thought and planning for meeting the growing need in language needs resulted in the Department of Immigration introducing one of the most remarkable innovations of Australian language policy – in any field. The Emergency Telephone Interpreting Service – a world first – was introduced in 1973. This was an attempt to meet the particular local conditions where diversity of languages needed was made even more difficulty by distance and a scattered population (Department of Immigration 1973). Introduced at first in Sydney and Melbourne, and covering eight languages in a 24-hour service, the service grew very quickly to encompass a wide variety of languages in all population centres and eventually covering the continent. (Currently over 100 languages are regularly used.) Until a partial cost recovery was instituted in the early 1990s, this was a free service to all individuals and institutions.

The popularity of the service and the diversity of needs being catered for – by no means only 'emergency' needs – led to the dropping of 'emergency' from the name of the service which became simply known as the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS). In addition to telephone interpreting, the service provided on-site interpreting for situations where a face-to-face interpreter would be more appropriate than an over-the-phone interpreter. TIS has remained a crucial backbone of interpreting service, both as a front-line service and as a backup to other language services that developed in several states. In Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, it has continued as virtually the sole public sector interpreting service.

The advent of TIS was followed by the establishment of several other interpreting services by state and federal governments to meet both general and specific needs. In Victoria the Education Department set up an interpreting service from schools from the mid-1970s. A series of federal and state reports on aspects of immigration, multiculturalism and services to migrants (Galbally 1978; NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission 1978) led to the establishment in New South Wales in the late 1970s and 1980s of such services as the Health Care Interpreter Service and the Ethnic Affairs Commission's language services. In Victoria a wide range of specialist services were established including the Mental Health Interpreter Service, Central Health Interpreter Service and the Legal Interpreting Service. The Commonwealth's Department of Social Security (DSS) established its own dedicated interpreting system from the mid-1980s, using sessional staff who worked specified half-days or full days at DSS offices, and their availability at those times was advertised to clients of the relevant language group. DSS also established a multilingual information line which increasingly took on operational duties for NESB callers. The commitment by governments to provide essential services to migrants and the services these migrants dealt with was continuing. I discuss more recent developments in some of these services below.

Apart from government services, there was also a slowly growing private market in I/T from the 1960s. These were usually small agencies that sprung up in the capital cities and which concentrated on medico-legal work, particularly in the area of workers' compensation which at the time was dealt with as torts and required often lengthy adversarial proceedings. Some commercial work was also done by this sector, though this area remained minuscule until well into the 1980s.

Meanwhile, Sign Languages interpreting needs were slowly coming to be identified in the Deaf Societies and other organisations that had historically catered for the Deaf. Historically, these institutions had played a major cradle-to-grave welfare function in which the role of interpreter was not clearly distinguished from that of welfare worker (Flynn 1996; Ozolins & Bridge 1999). Although a few Deaf individuals had been successful in Australian society in various spheres, generally they had not been assisted by interpreters. Few Deaf individuals reached higher educational or occupational levels, and prevailing attitudes towards Deaf education stressed oralist approaches and a neglect of sign language. This situation started to change in the 1970s with greater travel by the Deaf to other countries, particularly the USA, where education opportunities were greater for the Deaf, and Sign Language (SL) was carving out its own status, including recognising the importance of SL interpreters (Flynn 1981). As Deaf groups around the world came to identify common problems, individuals took on solely interpreting roles by the late 1970s, and local Deaf Societies began to run SL interpreting services. Despite their different backgrounds, many of the issues facing SL interpreters were shared with interpreters in spoken languages of the migrant groups: defining a role, having their role understood by users, ensuring standards, and achieving professional status (Frishberg 1990). Deaf groups and SL interpreters were part of the broad constituency for a national language policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which promotion of Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and recognition of Auslan interpreting were priority agenda items.

Completely uncoordinated and unthought-out were interpreting services in Indigenous languages. The use of interpreters in Aboriginal languages had developed almost entirely in relation to one area of official activity – police work – where attitudes towards interpreters were even more distorted than in relation to European language interpreters. Aborigines were used not so much as interpreters as direct police auxiliaries, with often confusion between roles of informant, interpreter or police worker. Attitudes towards Aboriginal languages were heavily conditioned by the racist relations and understandings of the time. There was also intense suspicion of the few Europeans who had learnt Aboriginal languages well enough to work in them (McNally 1981).

Professional standards

The question of standards in I/T work was not addressed in any meaningful way over the 1950s and 1960s. There were no standards of education, background or performance established for practitioners. More palpably to those who worked with interpreters, there was no clearly defined role of an interpreter accepted by all sides: there were variations in the expectations of many clients, and in the performance of interpreters themselves. Some saw their role to be the medium of communication between the two parties, others saw themselves as being principally there to assist their migrant clients. As concerns for social disadvantage and the position of migrants heightened in the 1960s, concerns for advocacy of migrants' rights were slowly intertwined into some interpreters' understandings of their role. Some interpreters saw it as an important duty to explain to migrant clients many things besides what was being communicated by the other party – each area of police work, medical or legal work found different understandings of what their role should be. As the field had no standards, it was often staffed by part timers who had no commitment to the field beyond its immediate cash return and no interest in having standards imposed on them. Many practitioners were transient (for example, students) or came into and out of I/T as circumstances in their life allowed. In the private market, some English-speaking professionals found it useful to cultivate interpreters to bring in clients of that language group.

With no accepted role, no set qualifications for practice, no established training and no recognised professional body, I/T had to create its own standards in a highly diverse and fragmented field. Moves to establish standards intensified over the 1970s, involving the Department of Immigration's task forces, established in 1973 to look at all aspects of migrant service provision, as well as the Australian Council for Social Services which established a subcommittee on interpreting, and several user groups (Martin 1978). Drawing on such input, the federal government's Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications published a report that detailed a possible system of accreditation and quality control for the interpreting profession (Committee on Overseas Professional Qualifications 1977). This system formed the basis of the establishment in 1977 of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

NAATI took a broad approach to devising several levels of accreditation, covering the gamut of I/T work from bilingual aide to simultaneous conference interpreting, with similar levels in translation (NAATI 1978). NAATI first of all devised five levels of interpreting, recently changing the nomenclature to indicate by name the level of accreditation reached (see Table 12.1). Translation accreditation was available at levels 2 to 5.

Table 12.1 **Levels of accreditation**

Level of interpreting	Description of level
Bilingual aide (formerly level 1)	Not a level of interpreting, but for public contact personnel who use another language while performing their primary duties, for example a social security clerk who interviews clients in another language and keeps records in English.
Paraprofessional interpreter (formerly level 2)	For those for whom interpreting may form only a small part of other duties. For relatively straightforward and not complex interpreting situations.
Interpreter (formerly level 3)	The basic professional level, meant for those working full-time as an interpreter in the common fields of interpreting in Australia, such as, community, welfare, health, law, education.
Advanced interpreter (formerly level 4)	Simultaneous conference interpreter.
Senior advanced interpreter (formerly level 5)	A small cadre of senior conference interpreters, currently only filled by International Association of Conference Interpreters members.

A striking feature of the NAATI accreditation system, replicated in few accreditation systems elsewhere in the world, has been its inclusion of all levels of interpreting and translating and related bilingual work in one interlinked system of accreditation. Even though the imperatives to provide a system of accreditation came entirely from those concerned with languages of migrants in Australia, NAATI's accreditation system was far-sighted enough to include provision for accreditation in international conference interpreting and technical translating – at the time areas with few practitioners in Australia. This can be termed vertical comprehensiveness, in that the one system of accreditation covers all forms of interpreting and translating.

An equally striking feature of the NAATI system is that it has been able to accommodate I/T in all languages in Australia, including two categories of languages that are often excluded from other accreditation or certification systems: Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and Australia's Indigenous languages. I return to these areas below. This accommodation of such a diverse group of languages can be termed horizontal comprehensiveness, and is again unique: where forms of accreditation exist in other countries for, say, Sign Language interpreting, these are generally quite distinct from provisions for spoken language interpreting.

Under the NAATI system, accreditation is generalist; there are not specific accreditation levels for, say, court interpreters or health interpreters, as can be found in some other countries (Berk-Seligson 1990; Colin & Morris 1996). The levels describe instead broad areas of competence, and accreditation is gained by passing tests or courses that select from a wide range of situational contexts relevant to I/T at that level for that language. To date just over 20,000 accreditations in over 50 languages have been awarded by NAATI at the various levels.

Particular mention must be made of bilingual aides (level 1), another level of linguistic work that again is rarely recognised in other countries. Accreditation for bilingual aides was an attempt to provide a more direct means of providing services in other languages in large public organisations, utilising the language proficiency of their staff. This recognition of the language capacities of public servants was formalised through the Language Availability Performance Allowance which provides a small reward to those who speak other languages and use them in their contact with clients – for example a DSS officer who conducts an interview with a client in a language other than English and keeps records in English – and who could pass a NAATI language aide or higher level test. It also attested to the vast resource of language capacity that was revealed as speakers of other languages took up positions in the public service.

The NAATI system was established to provide much needed professional standards to an often misunderstood and exploited field. By itself, however, NAATI's accreditation system has had no legislative authority: the question of whether institutions use accredited interpreters or not has depended upon what benefits institutions have found in doing so. An essential aspect of NAATI's role over the past 20 years has been one of persuasion of institutions to insist on using accredited practitioners (NAATI 1994). Unlike some other systems of certification established, such as court interpreting in the USA, there is no mandatory requirement to use accredited interpreters. Use of accredited interpreters has depended on a slow, long march through the institutions, as institutions have put in place their own policy procedures which now increasingly stress the use of accredited interpreters, and more practitioners advertise themselves as having NAATI qualifications. Objective difficulties also have stood in the way: even though significant numbers of practitioners have been accredited in major languages, this has not been the case in all languages of demand or all geographical areas, and Australia's scattered population and the continually changing nature of immigration and refugee intakes militates against easy responses to need.

Accreditation

NAATI accreditation can be gained by three means: recognition of overseas qualifications, testing, and courses. A small number of practitioners from overseas, particularly those who have been to recognised I/T training schools, are able to gain accreditation on this basis. The most significant accreditation means however have been through testing and through courses.

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Testing

The testing program of NAATI has been the mainstay of its accreditation system and has been provided in over 50 languages. As with other innovations already highlighted, this again has been a continuous experiment and learning process. Language panels control the tests, and the greatest challenge has been to constitute panels with sufficient expertise, especially in the less commonly used languages and in newly demanded languages. Given that in many languages and many countries interpreting is unknown or unaccredited, those with qualifications in I/T in these languages are few. To ensure standards, experienced I/T professionals with other languages are put onto panels in the less common languages to educate and ensure a common understanding among those panel members who do speak the particular language. Common English passages are set (for example, for translations and consecutive interpreting out of English) to ensure that at least some testing items are common to all.

One of the striking features of this program is its attempt to institute an approach to I/T testing which directly measures I/T and transfer skills, not merely language proficiency. While a technical discussion is outside the scope of this chapter, interpreting testing in particular is one of the most complex forms of testing of any language task and poses daunting challenges. This issue has so far received little research attention.

Courses

At the beginning of NAATI's operations, it was anticipated that courses would become the standard mode of entry to the profession. To this end, a number of courses were established. At their peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s there were professional level (level 3) courses in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth in Colleges of Advanced Education (later universities), with a dozen level 2 courses throughout the country in TAFE colleges and even a few level 1 courses in secondary schools. One course in Japanese only has also been run at the advanced level (level 4) at the University of Queensland.

As there was hitherto no tradition of I/T teaching in general academic life in Australia, the pedagogy and curriculum of I/T courses had to again be invented virtually from first principles. At the time of the advent of courses in the late 1970s, there were no overseas models to follow since overseas schools of interpreting focused largely on conference interpreting, not the liaison interpreting needed in Australia. And expertise had to be created to teach in courses of a fully professional kind not only for the major languages that have been traditionally taught in education systems (such as, French, German and Spanish, or Japanese and Mandarin) but also for languages relevant to I/T needs that were much less widely taught, such as Turkish, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Slavonic languages. In a number of instances, this has meant that languages otherwise little represented in Australian higher education have had I/T courses devoted to them. At the paraprofessional level (level 2), the languages taught have been even more diverse. In the last few years, for example, paraprofessional courses have included Albanian, Amharic, Bosnian, Somali and others in response to new arrival cohorts, often as a result of refugee intakes.

While courses have contributed significantly to the development of the current I/T profession, they have in many cases run into difficulties. Small student numbers, increasing pressure on university budgets, changes to funding formulae, needing to adapt to new language demands and staffing difficulties led to the demise of courses at the professional courses in Adelaide and Brisbane and for one year in Melbourne. The number of professional courses (level 3) in Australia now stands at only two – at RMIT University and the University of Western Sydney – with the advanced course at the University of Queensland. Paraprofessional courses (level 2) have shrunk in terms of number of courses, but the remaining courses, in all the main capital cities except Hobart, have actually strengthened and diversified their offerings and begun to do more training in provincial areas and for special needs.

While courses have provided only a fraction of those accredited – around 35 per cent at the interpreter level (level 3) and some 40 per cent of paraprofessional (level 2) interpreter accreditations (Bell 1996) – graduates from courses in the major states are over-represented among the career practitioners and more active members of the profession. At present, university funding issues present increased pressure on relatively small, skills-based courses at university level. As a departure from the hitherto norm, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology introduced its own professional level course in its TAFE (now renamed vocational education and training – VET) structure.

Auslan and Indigenous languages

Particular issues have arisen in relation to Auslan interpreter training, and training in interpreting in Indigenous languages. Until now courses in Auslan have only run at the paraprofessional level (level 2) but accreditation at the interpreter level (level 3) is available by test alone. There is also need for higher level accreditation as a number of the demand areas for Auslan interpreting include high level educational, professional and conference work (Ozolins & Bridge 1999).

In Indigenous languages, NAATI has evolved a view that testing is not an appropriate means of gaining accreditation for these languages. Candidates in these languages may have limited understanding of the context of interpreting work, little background in the ethics of interpreting and little experience of testing of any kind, and in some cases they may have had very limited schooling. One-off testing is also strongly against established cultural patterns of discussion and communication within particular groups. In the light of this, accreditation is only available through courses, a number of which have run in the Northern Territory and Western Australia (Carroll 1999, Dixon 1999). Despite a number of false starts and lack of continuity that has bedevilled accreditation in Indigenous languages, a concerted effort since the mid-1990s has reinvigorated this field, even though programs are still often short-term and effective language services in Indigenous languages still seem a long way off (Carroll 1995; Attorney-General's Department & NAATI 1996).

The balance sheet for interpreting/translating policy

Over the past 30 years I/T has both contributed to and benefited from the more *general moves in Australia to welcome and support cultural and linguistic diversity*, but current issues in I/T cover a more rapidly-changing and contradictory set of institutional and ideological priorities than was found in the past. Moreover, a number of issues in I/T are, remarkably, still not resolved from the past. A crucial consideration is that, despite nearly thirty years of major language services and over twenty years of an accreditation system, we still do not have a situation of a 'normal' development of a professional area or of a clearly established industry where we can ensure not only reasonable standards but also a commitment to the field and its overall development from practitioners and users alike. Currently, we still see:

- unevenness in provision, availability, training and spread across languages and across geographical areas;
- continuing poor and, in some cases, even declining remuneration;
- unevenness in professionalism of individual practitioners;
- no common paths of entry to the profession or guaranteed professional socialisation (there is still no assurance that only professionally accredited interpreters are employed);
- few practitioners with higher level management, research or organisational skills;
- inadequate educational structures for training, professional development or research;
- no industry body which brings together major players in the field – agencies, providers, practitioners, regulators, policy-makers;
- no organisation of user groups.

It would seem at first glance that the significant innovations in Australian I/T, so enthusiastically lauded by Jill Blewett at the beginning of this chapter, have been put in place only for the field to be prevented from continuing to develop and mature.

Some of the unevenness of development is clearly linked to the ambition of covering such a diversity of languages. It should not be a surprise that finding interpreters in the languages of the newest arrivals is difficult, or that geographical areas are unevenly covered. Some of the possible responses to these issues, such as the increased use of telephone interpreting or better coordination of available I/T resources, become even more important in these contexts. However, other variations particularly in relation to expectations of practice, professional development, training, and remuneration are a continuing weakness of the field. Moreover, some important opportunities to improve aspects of the field have not been taken, while shifts particularly in public sector practices and ideologies have differentially affected I/T.

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At the same time, developments over the last 15 years have begun to realise some of the promise of the I/T field as a language resource that can be of great benefit to Australia. Both in the public and private spheres of I/T work, there has been a growing attention to I/T in the context of commercial activities and trade. Language services have been seen as crucial in export drives (Briggs 1987; Valverde 1990; Stanley, Ingram & Chittick 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council 1994). The number of international conferences being held in Australia and hence need for conference interpreters have also increased, and very gradually the distinctions between I/T for community use and I/T for trade and commercial use are becoming less clear cut.

Within the more traditional sphere of public sector community-oriented work, the sophistication of approach to client needs, and the identification of new areas in which I/T is relevant equally signals new understandings of language as a resource. One of the areas pursued in Australia by both I/T courses and I/T services is that of training clients to work with interpreters. The many years put into this is now paying off with more refined approaches to sectoral needs, based upon cooperation between I/T and the relevant professions or institutions. This is apparent in health, for example, with greater integration of language service considerations into public health practice and research (NSW Health Department 1995; Lopez & Fazzalori 1995; Minas 1996). It is also the beneficial effect of long work with the legal profession (Attorney-General's Department 1991; Laster & Taylor 1994; Robinson 1994; Cooke 1995; Law Society of NSW 1996). Special interests in I/T have been identified in ways that have not been looked at elsewhere in the world, such as the relation between women and language services (Pardy 1995; NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission 1995; Plimer & Candlin 1996).

Another aspect of service provision that has brought about new relations in the field is the beginning of mainstreaming of Auslan interpreting. In the 1990s, there has been a determined effort particularly by the Deaf Society in NSW but also in Victoria to step aside from providing interpreting in mainstream areas (eg health, social welfare, the law, public administration) which are covered by other language services, and which have now taken on Auslan as one of their languages. In NSW already some 65 per cent of Auslan interpreting in these mainstream areas is done by agencies other than the Deaf Society (Ozolins & Bridge 1999). Such integration of SL interpreting provision with spoken language interpreting provision is again a rarity in the world.

To understand better these very diverse fortunes, achievements and weaknesses of the I/T field, I examine the overall place of I/T in recent language policy, before attending to current unresolved issues in I/T, and areas of strength.

Interpreting/translating, language policy and language education policy

While I/T is today readily recognised by policy-makers as an area of importance in Australian life, its place beside other areas of language policy has often had to be defended for a number of reasons including the perceived low social and institutional status of I/T, and questions of whose jurisdiction it should fall under.

Looking at the development of overall language policy in Australia in recent decades, I/T at first seems to hold an important, indeed vital place. The Senate inquiry into language policy provided a useful overview of the development of the field and made broad-ranging recommendations for its development and support. Most significantly, the provision of services in other languages (in which I/T is a significant factor) formed one of the four main pillars of the Senate Committee's recommendations on the objectives of a national language policy (SSCEA 1984: 4). The four main pillars were:

- competence in English;
- maintenance and development of languages other than English;
- provision of services in languages other than English;
- opportunities for learning second languages.

The Lo Bianco report (1987) continued along the lines of the Senate report, including I/T as one of the areas considered. Its main emphasis was on professionalisation of the field, and all its discussion of I/T and recommendations were couched in this context. Professionalisation particularly related to ensuring adequate standards through control of entry into the profession, and registration of practitioners. The report also argued that I/T capacity could be a significant language resource meeting international as well as national communication needs, bringing profit to Australia. The report (p 164) was mindful of the marginalised status of I/T and its identification with migrants as a problem, and forcefully advocated that: 'Interpreting and translating ought to be regarded as an aspect of service provision in Australia rather than a welfarist program for the disadvantaged'. Lo Bianco also reiterated the Senate recommendation that the provision of services in other languages should be a major objective of the eventual *National Policy on Languages*.

The Lo Bianco report – a report for the federal education portfolio – already was more focused on language education compared to the broader approach to language policy of the Senate Committee, and the steady sea change to a perspective favouring a more limited language education policy was strongly reinforced in subsequent moves. Adding to this, the Lo Bianco report said little about the one issue that directly links I/T policy to education – the issue of courses as a necessary basis for providing a professional formation and development, and underpinning the professionalisation sought.

I/T was not one of the areas funded for specific grants or support in the subsequent *National Policy on Languages*, though I/T did figure in some of the work of the various funded projects, such as in the Language is Good Business conference (NLLIA 1991) and the work of the Language and Society Centre at Monash University (Ozolins 1991), funded under the subsequent National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA).

Dawkins, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, attempted to expunge I/T entirely as an issue for language policy in his abortive but menacing Green Paper (DEET 1990). He wished to remove the objective of provision of services in other languages, retaining only the three language education objectives, as he saw befitting his portfolio. He argued that a language policy must be restricted to his specific Commonwealth government portfolio of education, thus excluding a number of issues such as media, libraries, and I/T. In relation to I/T he referred to the then move by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs to establish a national Language Services Bureau, and stated that: 'The Commonwealth's provision of interpreter/translator services, for example, will be enhanced through the proposed establishment of a Language Services Bureau by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs' (DEET 1990: 2). As it turned out, that particular institution never came into existence.

The ensuing universal condemnation of the Dawkins approach, among others, succeeded in restoring the issue of services in other languages back into the objectives of the eventual White Paper and the Australian Languages and Literacy Policy (DEET 1991). Subsequent language policy, as detailed elsewhere in this volume, has however paid little regard to I/T issues, with the retreat of overt language policy, at least at the federal level, into a smaller and smaller number of discrete language education programs. The low point for I/T policy came with the stillbirth of a carefully constructed National Training Strategy for I/T. This strategy was developed by the NLLIA with the support of NAATI and other interested parties and was precisely meant to link the long-standing issue of professionalising the field through greater training effort, and the interests of the education sector (NLLIA 1993). The federal Department of Employment, Education and Training however, turning its back on many other aspects of language policy at the time, did not support the implementation of such a strategy.

Support for some I/T research and curriculum development has come however through the NLLIA, with a specific Centre for Research and Development in I/T eventually being established at Deakin University affiliating to the NLLIA (Ozolins & Egan 1995; Tebble 1996; Ozolins 1998; Ozolins & Bridge 1999). Considerable other useful work was done at the University of Western Sydney and the Key Centre for Asian Languages and Studies at the University of Queensland (for example, see Ginori & Scimone 1995; Hale & Campbell 1995, 1997; Hale 1996; Campbell 1998; Davidson 1992; Wakabayashi 1996a, 1996b).

State and federal policy levels: the differential impact on I/T

As with several areas of language education policy, there is now more focus on *state* language services in light of the continuing evacuation of responsibility by the federal government. Most states and territories have put together language service statements committing government services to provide I/T as needed by their client groups as part of standard service delivery (for example, see Ethnic Affairs Unit 1995a, 1995b; Bureau of Ethnic Affairs 1997). However, as we have seen, there is great diversity in the extent to which different states assume actual service delivery themselves or leave it to TIS or other I/T agencies.

An understanding of federal/state dynamics are crucial in assessing language policy in Australia. In language education policy, there were significant interactions over the 1970s and 1980s between the state governments and the Commonwealth government, particularly in terms of negotiating common priorities (for example, in respect of the Rudd report 1994) or setting higher goals for language education. It was often a case of innovative states like Victoria or South Australia pushing the Commonwealth forward, which in turn pushed slower moving states such as Queensland.

In I/T the dynamics between Commonwealth and state responsibilities are even more critical, as (unlike, say, school education which is essentially controlled by state governments) I/T has a national infrastructure (especially through NAATI, TIS and Centrelink language services, and in relation to Indigenous languages) and the abnegation of federal responsibility hits unequally hard at I/T.

There is thus a differential and highly negative consequence if the federal government signals declining interest in this area. Four examples show this.

The abolishing of local TIS offices

As a national provider, TIS is the single most important language service in the nation. In states that do not have their own language services and where TIS has been the sole public sector provider – in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia – TIS has always taken on a much broader role than in states such as Victoria and New South Wales where there are other language services, and more alternative opportunities for training and professional development generally (Ozolins 1998). In Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, TIS has had a considerable role in training, professional development and standard setting. Administrative restructuring in TIS in the late 1990s and an endless effort to cut costs has meant that local TIS offices have been abolished in Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and other smaller cities, with many consequences. Telephone interpreting will be sourced from Melbourne, Sydney or Perth only. But equally crucially, wider professional activities will no longer be run, and even operational work, such as recruitment of new staff, quality control and work allocation in these centres, is now being organised from offices in other states with no local knowledge. The gap between the quality of services in the different states – even within a supposed unified national service – is likely to widen.

A non-mandatory national accreditation system

As previously described, having a national accreditation system has not resulted in only accredited practitioners being employed in language services. While preference for accredited interpreters has been largely instituted by public language services and most larger private services, it is still the case that unaccredited practitioners are found even in heavy demand languages, and all too often practitioners with lower accreditation are sent to work in professional level situations. There are particular issues again in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia where the bulk of work is done by paraprofessional (level 2) or unaccredited practitioners (Athanasiais & Turner 1994). Considering that a national accreditation system is already in place, and as I/T work often crosses state boundaries, the typical state-based registration systems of some other professions are not the appropriate model.

As in other professions, the push for a system of registration arose from this long-standing desire to control entry to the profession, to protect standards and set baselines of professional performance (Goodstone 1986). Such a desire, pressed by numerous I/T interests but particularly by NAATI and the national professional association AUSIT (Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators) in the late 1980s and 1990s, ran into a growing government commitment to markets and suspicion of regulation. A hard-won consultancy was eventually established in 1995 by Immigration to look at possible forms of registration. In what turned out to be one of the more futile consultancies ever undertaken in language policy, the consultancy showed little understanding of the field of I/T and an absolute preference for *de*-regulation expressed at every point, with every red herring of competition policy or fear of closed shops and burden of compliance argued, despite all submissions to the contrary. With the doors closed on effective registration through some legislative avenue, Australia is in the ludicrous position of having a national accreditation system without a means of making this system mandatory for practitioners.

The role of the Immigration department

A third way in which federal policy peculiarly affects I/T is in relation to the role of the Immigration department in its various manifestations. Crucially, I/T in Australia has always been seen as an aspect of immigration and settlement policy. Indelibly tied to this perspective has been the view that I/T is there to solve problems for migrants – for migrants disadvantaged by their lack of English. Despite the institutional commitment detailed above, and the growth of I/T as part of general institutional responsibility and its increasing commercial reach, this identification of I/T with the disadvantaged migrant remains. The areas of I/T which clearly have no connection whatever to immigration – Auslan interpreting and interpreting in Indigenous languages – are also seen as areas concerned with disadvantage or disability, ranking low in the hierarchy of political and social awareness, if they are considered at all.

The Immigration department has retained its control over several aspects of I/T – TIS in particular, but also accommodating NAATI – at least partly over concern for what would happen if substantial responsibility for I/T were given to other portfolio areas. Given that provision of language services is now increasingly enshrined in service charters, mission statements and other consumer-oriented material, this may seem not to be such a worry, but it is clearly recognised that the interests of I/T could suffer if Immigration withdrew its interest. This represents something of a dilemma, in that the continuing identification of I/T with immigration may tend to marginalise the field. On the other hand, Immigration is the only department which can even pretend to be dedicated to supporting the I/T field more generally, and in which language services are a substantial part of the budget.

Immigration has itself been quite aware of this issue and in the late 1980s sought different models of providing public sector language services. The most comprehensive model was the proposed creation of a national Language Services Bureau, divorced from Immigration, which would unite the several different language services at federal and state levels. This Language Services Bureau would provide a greater concentration of expertise, more backup and professional development, and an identity as a major institution to service all public sector needs, whether for local or international communication (KPMG Peat Marwick 1990; Shannon 1991). Intense differences of opinion with some state services, and a lack of willingness on the part of the federal government to create another large institution finally led to the abandonment of this idea, and thus an opportunity went begging to put language services on a better professional and financial basis.

The I/T needs of the Deaf and the Indigenous population

Finally, the federal government through its constitutional responsibilities is a leading player in relation to two population groups with their own increasingly recognised I/T needs. These are the Deaf, especially in the light of the federal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), and the Indigenous population, through the federal government's explicit responsibility but also because of the greatly increased attention to Indigenous affairs generally within Australia. The DDA, adopted along the lines of similar acts in the USA and Britain, gives a prominent place to interpreters by making it an act of discrimination to treat someone differently in specified spheres (for example, employment, housing, services, entertainment) on the basis of their need to use interpreters. In I/T for Indigenous languages, the professionalisation of the field is progressing only in fits and starts. Several attempts have been made to create the basis for a strong Aboriginal language service, but in each case have been confounded by short-term financial commitments and lack of continuity of programs. The most recent serious attempt involved a number of federal state and territory instrumentalities, NAATI and other interested groups, in planning a national Aboriginal interpreting policy (NAATI 1995; Attorney-General's Department & NAATI 1996).

As seen in all these examples, the national level of policy-making remains crucial. Moreover, it is likely that, in future, attempts by the federal government to seek further cost-cutting and shedding of responsibilities is inevitable. In the arrangements for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) introduced in 2000, all proceeds go to the states, leaving the federal government even more dependent upon income tax, which it is committed to reduce. At the same time, national responsibilities will continue in the areas of immigration, disability, Indigenous affairs and trade, with likely further attempts to rationalise services and slough off responsibility to perceived consumers.

An institution-driven rather than profession-driven or industry-driven field

A key feature of I/T in Australia has been that I/T has not been a profession-driven field but an institution-driven one, with a strong emphasis on public sector involvement and top-down authority. This is by no means an unusual Australian feature, with a heavy reliance of public institutions often being equated with democracy and fair treatment. It has meant however that, in the specific instance of I/T, we have a situation where public authorities have their own limited goals in needing language services and have expectations that these can be met, but have no overall interest in such issues as the development of a profession or offering good remuneration for I/T work. Quite the contrary, it would be of benefit to these institutions to have the lowest-paid and most easily available practitioners in a vast range of languages on call, yet all capable of course of performing at a high professional level.

In this context, it has been particularly difficult to establish a strong professional body, characteristic for example of European conference interpreting or of the comparable strength of ESL teachers in Australia and their wider support mechanisms in educational institutions and research establishments. Moreover, it was envisaged at the start of NAATI's operations that its functions would be taken over by an I/T professional body in due course, a situation that has not come about, and early hopes of an effective professional body have not materialised, much less a capable industry body. These are significant failings, and reflective of other shortcomings in other areas of language policy.

A heavy reliance on public institutions also makes the field very susceptible to changes in government ideologies which may reign for other reasons and have no particular genesis in language issues, but which then affect the field often capriciously. Examples here of the effects of policies introduced for reasons quite distant from actual concerns with language are telling.

A significant policy that has affected much of the public sector in Australia has been the insistence by governments that the public sector outsource many of its functions, particularly professional and technical areas. In the case of TIS, as described above, this has meant the disbandment of a considerable body of excellent professional officers who knew the I/T field intimately and who were able to work as interpreters or translators, as well as do professional development work such as training users in how to work with interpreters or provide in-service to practitioners. The few who remain act only as administrative staff liaising with the large army of casual contractors who do the actual interpreting or translating. This, together with other organisational changes described above, has meant a downward spiral for this formerly pre-eminent service.

The same policy in the case of Centrelink (the successor for the operational part of the Department of Social Security) has seen this body farm out management of its large number of contract sessional staff, who practise in Centrelink offices, to an outside company. But given the tender specified that national coverage was required, and there are no effective national-based private I/T companies in Australia, the tender went to a national personnel firm with no expertise in I/T: the Centrelink interpreting staff would be 'managed' on the assumption that no knowledge about I/T and its professional issues was required.

If tendencies towards a reassertion of monolingualism are again apparent in other spheres of language policy, it is very significant that similar tendencies can be found in these instances in the I/T field.

Insisting on outsourcing services, or introducing purely managerial forms of control with no professional understanding of I/T, are reflections of wider processes of removing the public sector from direct professional service delivery, and in some cases letting markets dictate the services to be offered. But such an unwavering commitment to these practices becomes absurd when the preconditions for success and adequate performance are not there.

Many of these outsourcing practices are predicated on having a clear set of resources that can be utilised by any organisation, for example that interpreters are available, that all practitioners are prima facie competent and that there are simple ways of identifying suitable practitioners. Yet this seems to proceed on the assumption that other functioning institutions have already done their work in preparing a professional cadre and put in place the support structures that a profession needs. *If* training institutions actually trained new entrants to the field, *if* accreditation was mandatory for practice, *if* professional development was a normal expectation and practice of the profession and *if* all practitioners and agencies abided by explicit codes of conduct and codes of practice – if all of these conditions were met then it may seem that individuals or agencies could presumably compete for work and service delivery on something approaching a reasonably level playing field. As these conditions are not close to being met, it is crucial to have language services with an in-depth knowledge of the field, its complexities and shortcomings, the nature of the communities involved and innumerable other factors, to be able to assess and meet language needs in particular instances.

Moreover, given the still extant commitments to social objectives – whether in relation to immigration, disabilities or Indigenous affairs – and the often sensitive nature of these commitments, a resort to managerialism seems hardly appropriate. Managerial changes always carry unanticipated consequences in this field – in the early 1990s, TIS started charging for its telephone interpreting to major users. The cost was not high ($A10 a call) and came at a time when at a number of levels cost-recovery was being introduced for I/T use by government departments, forcing them to calculate language service estimates in their budgets instead of relying upon a free service. Yet even this mild and only partial cost-recovery effort by TIS led to numerous cases of staff in public institutions being warned not to use the service, or to always get approval for such use – a significant brake on this formerly on-demand service. TIS has more recently moved to full cost recovery.

More radically, there are problems with the very notion of 'service delivery' as being the description of what has to be done to ensure adequate language services. In relation to I/T in the languages of more recently arrived groups, new practitioners may be totally unfamiliar not only with the particular institutional context in which they are working, but with the very specific techniques and ethics of I/T. The lack of enforceable standards means that these shortcomings may also be apparent among some practitioners from even the most common languages. If 'service delivery' does not here include substantial aspects of professional socialisation, contextual familiarisation, feedback, training and mentoring, then the service will not be properly delivered, but these are rarely likely to be components tendered out, or form part of briefs. It is more common for recruitment to be stipulated as a purely technical exercise.

Language as a resource – the contribution of I/T

As previously mentioned, one of the more positive signs of the growth in I/T has been in the commercial field, and particularly in blurring the previous distinctions between I/T for community needs and for trade and business needs. We have seen over this time the development of effective and professional private agencies that have grown not only from outsourced government work, but also by building up commercial sides whether in conference interpreting, high quality translations, multilingual media or other areas.

The processes of outsourcing and reducing public sector liability have been criticised earlier in this chapter, but just as in some cases this has led to long traditions of institutional expertise being broken up, in a few cases it has led to new innovations. Such a different outcome has come in the case of Victoria, where state bodies became free to purchase their language services from any provider, and the previous overarching government-controlled language service (the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service – VITS) was corporatised and finally became a private competitor. It competed for tenders, developed new areas of expertise (for example, conference interpreting) and has aggressively sought new business. Significantly, VITS is one of the few government or ex-government I/T organisations where top decisions-makers are also I/T practitioners.

While commercial activities are still very much the smaller part of language services (except for a very few specific languages like Japanese), the potential for growth here seems assured with the steady growth of areas such as multilingual multimedia, software localisation and multilingual call centres, though increasingly here I/T agencies will be competing with other kinds of companies with expertise in the particular field of technology but with little understanding of language and I/T issues. While monolingual attitudes may still be the more dominant in Australian business, there is a steady rise in awareness of the necessity for language considerations to become part of the normal service provision of any business, in recognition of an essentially multilingual clientele whether internally or externally. We have noted earlier the conspicuous place that language services occupy in relation to both the health and legal systems.

I have noted that a strong profession has still not emerged in the I/T field, but of equal concern is the lack of an industry structure and an effective industry body. With their often humble origins, many I/T agencies tend to see themselves more as competitors for a slice of a small cake than as industry colleagues in whose interests is the promotion of the field as a whole. On matters of policy there is no voice that can authoritatively represent any sizeable slab of the I/T industry, and representation by default often falls to NAATI, even on matters way beyond its brief of accreditation and standards.

An international model

While coping with present cutbacks, budgetary constraints, restructurings and monolinguals deciding I/T policy, the achievements of Australian I/T need to be kept in perspective. Despite the vicissitudes discussed extensively above, Australia has clearly worked out a model of provision of language services that is of considerable relevance to numerous countries now coming to grips with newly created or rediscovered multilingual populations, and the communication needs this entails (Shackman 1984; World Federation of the Deaf 1992; Wadensjo 1998; Carr et al 1997).

The provision of an integrated accreditation system, the commitment to provide language services, and the commitment to comprehensiveness in coverage of all relevant languages all attest to great ambitions in solving communication issues. The wonder may be not that so many issues remain unresolved, but that there has been success in making I/T an indelible part of public sector work and a growing presence in the commercial market.

In the Australian view, those interpreters who work in the major immigrant languages in community settings (such as in social welfare, the courts, the health system) are providing a professional service and need to be seen as professionals, with accreditation and status to match. In still very many other countries there is no link established between professional practitioners working mostly in international languages and who are termed 'interpreters', and those interpreting for local community needs who are given a variety of names from 'migrant liaison worker' to 'cultural interpreter' (Gentile 1996). In Australia an 'interpreter', without any further description, can be one who works either locally or for international needs; increasingly in the future, many Australian interpreters and translators will work in both.

13 Deafness and sign language in government policy documents 1983–1990

Des Power

Introduction: Recent history of education of the deaf in Australia

In 1983 a group of signing Deaf people and some hearing people working in various deafness-related areas attended a weekend conference in Canberra hosted by the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA) to discuss matters to do with submissions to the then current inquiry of the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts into a national language policy for Australia.[1] Some FECCA people asked why Deaf people were there and why they would be interested in language matters.

Today those questions are unlikely to be asked by anyone familiar with cultural and linguistic issues. Deaf people have come a long way – and this has been in some part due to the influence of the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987) and *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991). And it is also partly as a result of the opportunities given in these policy documents to Deaf people and interested members of the hearing community for initiatives to improve community understanding of the cultural and linguistic status of Deaf people and their community, as well as in response to earlier and similar developments overseas, especially in the United States of America and Scandinavia.

With rare exceptions, for most of Western history, Deaf people were regarded as somehow retarded ('deaf and dumb' = stupid as well as speechless) and their sign language variously as broken, garbled versions of the local spoken and written language, 'just gesture', or pantomimic iconic representations of events and objects in the here and now. The belief in sign language iconicity led to opposition to its use for education because it was held that it tied deaf students to the 'here and now' which meant their thinking became 'concrete' and incapable of extended rational activities.[2]

Hence sign languages have, until very recently, not been much used for educational purposes.[3]

This non-use of sign language may seem strange to some not familiar with education of the deaf. Surely many deaf students use signing for communication in their everyday learning? Yes, they do – but with rare (though increasing) exceptions, the signing they use is not Auslan. In Australia, the signing deaf students use is known as 'Australasian Signed English' (MacDougall 1988). It has become conventional to make a distinction between Artificial Sign Systems (rather pejoratively, ASSs) like Australasian Signed English and Natural Sign Languages (NSLs) like Auslan.

NSLs are the languages Deaf people use for living their lives: they meet all the criteria of being a language. Hockett (1960) lists these criteria as: 'rapid fading' of the signal; 'arbitrariness' of the relation of the word and its meaning; 'productivity' ('generativity' in Chomskian terms); 'extragenetic transmission' (the language learned by an individual is a social, not an hereditary life product); and 'duality of patterning' (the emergence of meaning from combinations of meaningless units, that is, words from phonemes). Klima and Bellugi (1979) called this last criterion the 'hierarchically organized' characteristic of language. To these criteria Klima and Bellugi added 'well-formedness' (some strings of phonemes and words are recognised by users of the language as correct and others as not being so).

Sign languages meet all these criteria: the sign disappears visually just as the sound of a word does auditorily; there is not usually any relationship between a sign shape and its meaning;[4] signs are produced from meaningless 'chiremes' equivalent to phonemes in spoken languages; which sign language a child learns depends on the linguistic community in which it is raised, just as it does for spoken languages; and signers can recognise and accept or reject well-formed and ill-formed sentences.

Only one of Hockett's criteria is not met by sign languages – what he calls the use of the 'vocal-auditory channel' for the expression of the language. As Hockett's paper was written before 1960, he could not have known of the research initiated in the 1960s by Stokoe (1960) and a group at Gallaudet University (Stokoe, Casterline & Croneberg 1965) which demonstrated that sign languages meet the criteria Hockett required except that they use the manual-visual channel instead of the vocal-auditory one. It would generally be agreed these days that these considerations would force a widening of Hockett's criteria to include the manual-visual channel as well as the vocal-auditory.

So NSLs are therefore 'true languages', organically growing and developing as part of the human capacity for constructing, expressing and understanding meaning, just as spoken languages are. ASSs, on the other hand, are a code on the local spoken language, just as braille could be said to be, but expressed on the hands rather than on paper.[5] ASSs use signs from the local NSL, invented signs and fingerspelling (where there is a sign for every letter of the alphabet) to represent the morphographemic structure of English (MacDougall 1988). ASSs are usually used in conjunction with spoken English so as to reproduce on the hands what is being said concurrently, in what is usually known as 'total' or 'simultaneous communication'. In Australia, Signed English (SE) was developed by groups of teachers of the deaf for educational purposes and is now found almost only in use in educational settings. Many teachers of the deaf argue that because English is the local language of educational, vocational and social life, it is necessary for deaf students to learn it and use it, and SE is the best means of doing this in 'through-the-air' communication.[6]

Some Deaf people assisted in the development of SE because, like teachers of the deaf, they were dissatisfied with the progress of deaf children learning English under purely oral methods. However, SE has now been largely rejected by the Deaf community because it often violates one or more of the aesthetics, semantics or formational rules of NSL and has not produced the benefits of English learning improvement that had been hoped for. This latter claim is still controversial but, as we shall see below, SE is likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable future in most programs that use signing at all as many teachers argue that it is necessary for better English learning and that with its consistent use by parents and teachers from an early age some improvements in school learning (especially in literacy in English) are beginning to appear (Allen 1986; Schick & Moeller 1992).

Australia has not been alone in this historical path in recent years. With and without explicit government policy, in the United States and in many countries in Europe (especially Scandinavia), there has been acceptance of the notion that Deaf people constitute a cultural and linguistic community and of the validity and utility of NSSs for the purposes of life, and in education (though somewhat more controversially). Some Scandinavian countries have even legislated to make the status of sign language official and to mandate its use, for example, in education and in providing interpreting where needed. We have not yet gone this far Australia but, as we shall see below, similar developments have occurred without being legislated. Developments have not been taken as far as many would like, but still there has been a considerable advance on where we were in 1982.

Deafness and signing in Australian language and literacy policy documents

Below I examine specific instances where the various language (and later, literacy) documents produced in Australia impacted on the kind of issues in Deafness and Auslan use that I have outlined above. However, it should also be noted that the various documents also created a more sophisticated understanding of language and cultural matters generally. There were spin-offs for Deaf people and Auslan use from this 'atmosphere' as well as from specific mentions of Deafness and Auslan matters in the documents. I note two of these in passing: the more widespread employment of 'immersion' second language teaching approaches created a climate where 'immersion' in Auslan for education could be more favourably considered; and, the widespread acceptance of interpreting services for oral languages and the necessity for professionalising such services led to better and more professional sign language interpreting services.

Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts inquiry into a national policy on languages 1982–83

In 1982 I was asked by the Australian Deafness Council (the then peak body in the deafness/Deafness field) to consult widely and produce a document for submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (SSCEA) inquiry into the development and implementation of a coordinated language policy for Australia. I accepted and after several months produced a consensus document from the field that the Australian Deafness Council (ADC) submitted to the committee (SSCEA 1984). I also gave oral evidence on behalf of the ADC at committee hearings in Brisbane in 1983 (SSCEA 1984). The document submitted covered a wide range of issues related to communication, language and deafness, many of which are not relevant to the focus of this chapter. Here I will concentrate on the issues to do with Deafness as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon and on Auslan as a means of communication for personal, social and academic development.

Report on a national language policy by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, October 1984

The 1984 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (SSCEA) makes mention of Deafness in several places – most of them as a result of the ADC's submission. Perhaps typical of the time, but indicative of a continuing issue in the Deafness field, is the inclusion of consideration of Deafness matters in the chapter of the report called 'Language needs of persons with communication handicaps' (SSCEA 1984). There is some tension in the field as to whether deaf people should be considered a 'handicap/disability group' or a 'cultural and linguistic minority community' (Australian Association of the Deaf 1992). It is now generally accepted that Deaf people do constitute a linguistic and cultural community, in many respects not unlike other non-English speaking background communities. Indeed the report itself (SSCEA 1984: 97, 100) acknowledges this:

> Sign languages…are languages in their own right and should be treated as such when language policies are being considered. …Australian Sign Language should be recognised as a community language. There are certain similarities in language use and needs between a small ethnic group and the deaf community.

The report itself is somewhat indecisive about the status of Deaf people. While, as we have seen, being generally enlightened about the status of the Deaf community, it speaks of their 'plight' (p 100), and quotes (p 99) without comment a submission that states:

> [The limitations imposed on an individual by deafness] restrict opportunities to participate in social activities, adversely affect the individual's capacity to cope with the practicalities of living...and in consequence cause the development of a life style which is centred on being inadequate, being made to feel inferior, being incredibly lonely, being refused, shunned, denied and continually frustrated. It is probably fortunate that as a group they are small in number.

Anything less like the notion of a self-regarding social and cultural community it would be hard to find! (See for example Power 1997; Davie, Carty & Power 1989, 1992.)

Nevertheless, it is accepted that many of the services for Deaf children and adults are provided under the banner of 'disability' (or even 'health') programs (for example, special education and interpreting services). Even still, in 2001, there is concern that fighting too hard for cultural community status might endanger some of the services provided under these programs. The issue is still unresolved, though we have moved towards seeing such services as interpreting 'mainstreamed' in some states where they have been placed under the administration of generic intrepreting services in departments of immigration and ethnic affairs and suchlike. It is to be hoped that this trend continues.

As noted in the introductory brief history, there is now a distinction made between 'bilingual–bicultural' programs using Auslan and 'total communication' (TC) programs using Signed English and speech – many deaf people and some educators of the deaf having rejected the latter in favour of the former (though TC programs still predominate in state schools and services). This distinction was not so apparent in 1984. The ADC's submission acknowledges the status of Auslan as a community language and of the status of Signed English as an ASS (though not using that term!), and recommends a 'bilingual, bicultural' approach to education, but using Signed English – not a combination, as we have seen above, that would fall under the rubric of 'bilingual, bicultural' today. It was still not clear to the framers of the ADC's submission (including the present writer!) just what the role of various types of signing could or should be in educating deaf children.

As a result of the comments on deafness and education of the deaf made in the SSCEA report, it was attacked from both sides of the 'methodological wars' (Luterman 1999). Advocates of an oral-only approach were upset at the recommendation that TC should be a favoured method (any signing being anathema to them) and advocates of the use of Auslan as the method of communcation in a bilingual, bicultural approach were upset that the Senate Committee recommended TC (implying the use of SE which such advocates regarded as being unacceptable and inefficient). Business as usual in the deaf education field!

The report made other references to matters to do with deafness: the need for more widespread captioning on television (better in 2001 but still not nearly widespread enough); issues relating to teacher education; the recruitment of Deaf teachers and teacher aides (improved, but still not nearly enough – especially teachers); improvement of secondary and post-secondary opportunities for deaf students; and the establishment of a central national tertiary education facility for deaf students.[7]

Of particular note is that the report made favourable comment on the fact that National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) accreditation was available for Auslan interpreters (only to the then level 2 at that time; the then level 3 – now known as 'professional' – is now available and 'conference interpreter' level accreditation is being developed), but does not comment on the short supply of such personnel – as short a supply then as it is now (Ozolins & Bridge 1999). Interestingly, it passes without comment that NAATI then accredited 'oral' interpreters (that is, English to English!), a practice that it has since dropped. The report clearly places Auslan in the context of oral community language interpreting, and notes that '[our general] recommendations about…the provision of interpreters…are directly relevant to the language needs of the deaf' (p 100).

A somewhat mixed start!

The 1987 National Policy on Languages (NPL)

The NPL essentially continues the thrust of the 1984 SSCEA report as outlined above, but with increased emphasis on the use of language policy as an equity and anti-discrimination measure which seeks to 'alleviate and overcome problems, disabilities, inequality and discrimination which may be encountered because of language' and to 'maximize…rights and opportunities' (Lo Bianco 1987: 4, 8). Lo Bianco also states (p 8) that:

> No Australian resident ought to be denied access to medical and health assistance, or equal, appropriate and fair treatment by the law including representation and other rights commonly associated with equality or deriving from citizenship, because of language disabilities, or lack of adequate, or any, competence in English.

Deaf people are clearly situated within such a 'rights approach', albeit still in 'disability' language terminology:

> The communication disabled, particularly deaf people, have evolved languages which are stable and which share many of the characteristics of community languages. (Lo Bianco 1987: 14)

On the other hand, a strong statement of the 'linguistic/cultural community' notion also appears:

> Deaf Australians have evolved Sign Language to meet their communication needs. Australian Sign Language is considered to be a language in the same sense as verbal languages and consequently is to enjoy the same status.[8] For children who use sign language, it is recognized that this is their language of initial learning. For the deaf, access to services and equity in opportunity generally require acknowledgement of their need for interpreting services

> and for education using the appropriate language systems.[9] ...The deaf consider Australian Sign Language to be their community language and desire that they be acknowledged as a community group with a distinctive language. This acknowledgment implies services and educational provisions which mirror those made for other [NESB] communities. (Lo Bianco 1987: 76)

Amongst other things, the NPL takes this to include the provision of such services as interpreting and, although Auslan is not specifically mentioned, the teaching in schools of Community Languages Other Than English (CLOTEs) of which Auslan is acknowledged to be one. In the section 'Contribution from New South Wales' a 'new initiative' in 'Acceptance of Australasian [sic] Sign Language as an Other Approved Studies course for the Higher School Certificate' is noted (Lo Bianco 1987: 214). Since the NPL, an Auslan course has also been made available in the Victorian Certificate of Education and Auslan is being taught as a school subject in a couple of Queensland high schools.

Auslan interpreting, like spoken language interpreting, is seen in the NPL as 'an aspect of service provision...rather than a welfarist program for the disadvantaged... Special attention needs to be paid to developing [interpreter] training...for the deaf (pp 164–5)'.[10]

The NPL canvasses a number of other issues relating to deafness, including:

- the establishment of a national research and professional training program in a higher education institution – this research probably led to the eventual establishment of the Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies at Griffith University; however, the professional training program did not eventuate;[11]
- the need for more provision of captioning on television, teletext and caption decoders – this is happening, up to a point;
- an examination of the desirability of a National Advisory Committee of the Deaf – this did not happen; and
- the need for libraries to pay particular attention to the needs of Deaf people – it is not clear if this is happening or not.

Perhaps largely because much of what was canvassed and recommended in the NPL really depended on state initiatives, which have been slow or non-existent in arriving, the NPL had little direct impact on services and programs in the Deafness field. However, the NPL, together with the 1984 SSCEA report, set an atmosphere and expectations about Deafness, the Deaf Community and Auslan that has paid off in greater community and professional awareness (if perhaps not public or media awareness) of the needs and aspirations of Deaf people and what is required to achieve those aspirations, especially regarding the use of Auslan in school programs.

The National Policy on Languages, December 1987 – March 1990

The report *The National Policy on Languages, December 1987 – March 1990: Report to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training* covers the activities of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME) from December 1987 to March 1990 (AACLAME 1990). AACLAME had been established under the NPL in 1987.

There are several mentions of Deafness and related matters in the report. Most important perhaps in its impact upon research and development in language matters (including Deafness) was the establishment of the Languages Institute of Australia (LIA – later the National Languages Institute of Australia, and then the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia). The LIA in its various manifestations (latterly rather precarious, with Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (as it now is) funding being wound down and finally stopped in 1998 – one of the most short-sighted and mean-minded actions of the present government) has proved in its short life quite influential in language matters generally, and Deafness matters specifically, through its funding of the Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies (CDCS) at the Faculty of Education, Griffith University. During its funding by the LIA and its successors the CDCS has completed a number of projects which have contributed to the Deafness field. These include the development of a proficiency rating scale for Auslan, a Deaf Studies curriculum for schools, a CD-ROM-based written English development program, an emergent literacy scale for children using sign language, and numerous papers on aspects of deafness/Deafness and education and community life. (For an extended bibliography see Power 1997.)

In the AACLAME report itself a number of Deafness-related initiatives are mentioned. Among these are projects funded by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Supplementation Program (MACSP). AACLAME itself made grants to the Australian Caption Centre for developing teacher awareness of the educational benefits of captioning videotape programs, to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) for development of the Victorian Certificate of Education Auslan Curriculum, and to the Australian Deafness Council of New South Wales for professional development for Deaf community language teachers. It is also noted that aspects of Deafness matters were considered by AACLAME subcommittees on LOTE (languages other than English) and language services.

Perhaps the sensitisation and atmosphere created by these documents and activities contributed to the funding of other projects by, for example, the Department of Education's Higher Education Branch and/or the Tertiary Education Commission. One such project was the large-scale development of materials and resources by a consortium of higher education institutions led by La Trobe University's (now) National Centre for Deaf Studies. The first true bilingual–bicultural education programs using Auslan in schools also emerged during this period, led by the

Claremont Project at preschool, primary, high school and college levels in Tasmania, followed by the programs at the Institute for Deaf and Blind Children in Sydney and the Victorian School for Deaf Children. Such programs seem set to expand.

The 1991 Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP)

The series of documents under consideration in this chapter culminated (so far at least!) with Minister Dawkins's release of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) in 1991 (DEET 1991). Deafness gets noticeable mention in the ALLP: Section 2.1.7 is devoted to 'Language provisions for the deaf and hearing impaired'. It states (p 19):

> For the deaf and hearing impaired in Australia, and others with communication disabilities, the primary objective of language education is to learn English. Deaf and hearing impaired children starting school are currently taught in English as if it were their first language. Most deaf students in regular classes are taught using oral methods of speech, listening and lipreading. Deaf students in special education units or schools are also taught orally, with access to English enhanced through 'manual supplementation' to oral teaching. 'Signed English' is the principal means of manual supplementation. ...The ALLP supports...these methods as appropriate to bridge the language and cultural gap for deaf people learning English in Australia.

Still 'disability language' terminology! Deaf people are included with people with 'communication disabilities'. Again no mention here of 'Deafness as Culture' or Auslan as a possible method of instruction. However, as noted above, things were beginning to move. The Claremont Program in Tasmania had been established, the Victorian School for Deaf Children had begun tentative moves to introduce combined teaching in Auslan and Signed English (later SE was dropped entirely in favour of Auslan) and the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children in Sydney was beginning the process that led to the establishment of its bilingual programs.

It seems though, that the ALLP wanted to have it both ways. It commended TC with SE as a suitable method, but went on to make the most forthright statement yet on Auslan as a community language and a language which could be used for education, as well as 'Deafness as Culture'.

> It is now increasingly recognised that signing deaf people constitute a group like any other non-English speaking language group in Australia, with a distinct subculture recognised by shared history, social life and sense of identity, united and symbolised by fluency in Auslan... Auslan is an indigenous language, having developed from British and Irish sign languages brought to Australia. An estimated 15,000 to 20,000 deaf Australians use Auslan – and it is actively passed on to children.
>
> Auslan could be made extensively available to deaf students in schools, colleges and universities. (DEET 1991: 20)

But then we fall away!

> However, the use of Auslan as a method of instruction for school-based general subjects or for teaching English is controversial, as the majority of deaf students come from English-speaking families. On the other hand, Auslan seems to be highly effective for teaching and also for interpreting verbal [really 'vocal', see endnote 8] instructions at higher levels of education and training and in the workplace. Further research is needed to assess the applicability of Auslan as a medium of instruction for deaf students. (p 20)

But then!

> Education systems should also consider the benefits of teaching Auslan to both deaf and hearing students. (p 20)

I am not quite clear what the last quote means for educating deaf students in Auslan, but the suggestion of teaching Auslan to hearing students (presumably as a second language) is admirable, and, as we saw above, happening in a few (too few!) places. The statements about whether to use Signed English or Auslan being controversial were indeed so in 1991. Less so in 2001 – most commentators who accept any use of signing have come to see the benefits of using Auslan for regular communication in the classroom — though wholehearted adoption of and commitment to Auslan is slow. Many teachers of the deaf, even though sympathetic to the notion of 'Deaf Culture' and Auslan as a Deaf community language, still argue that Signed English should be the preferred method of communication in school in our English-using society. Some (including the present writer) support the use of Auslan for regular school communication, but see a role for Signed English for teaching English in an avowedly Auslan-using bilingual-bicultural school program. The issue is unresolved at the time of writing, but the use of Auslan is certainly increasing in Australian programs for deaf students.

Later, the ALLP (p 52) seems to be more actively advocating the use of Auslan in school than in the sections quoted above, drawing on English as a second language (ESL) and general bilingual education program comparisons for its effectiveness, albeit in the context of deaf students who have Auslan as their first language.[12]

> Teaching English to deaf students who use a sign language as their first language has much in common with teaching ESL. Teachers of the deaf would benefit from access to specialist ESL methodologies, knowledge and materials.

But this stance (whether knowingly or not) appears to broaden to all deaf children.

> Research overseas supports the value of bilingual education in the national language and the first language [see endnote 12] (a sign language) for deaf children too. Like other children speaking another language who are also learning the national language, deaf children in bilingual programs apparently master the national language and the regular curriculum more quickly than children in monolingual programs. (p 52)

This statement neatly sums up the core of the argument of those who support bilingual-bicultural education for deaf students. They call upon the well-attested benefits of bilingual education generally to draw likely parallel benefits for deaf students. Whether the promise will be fulfilled is yet to be seen. Great belief is present among supporters (including the present writer, despite my worries about most such programs wanting to exclude SE altogether), but concrete evidence is not yet available.

The ALLP also repeats and reinforces the need of high quality and widespread interpreting services for deaf people, especially for advanced educational opportunities. It also acknowledges the point made (and expanded upon) later by Ozolins and Bridge (1999) that interpreting for deaf people has some significant differences from that in spoken languages.

> The needs of people who have hearing and/or speech ['speech' is a little odd in this context] impairments and who therefore need interpreting services, differ from those normally described as of 'non-English speaking background'. Unlike all other users of other languages in Australia, deaf people have a continuing need for interpreting services in sign language. The absence of sign language interpreting excludes the hearing and speech impaired from many education opportunities and all professions, even if they have near-native knowledge of and literacy in English. It also denies them access to information in civil, legal, medical, and industrial affairs, and the opportunity to participate in the life of the general community. (p 98)

A very insightful statement, and one that is used as a springboard for advocating more availability of interpreting services for deaf people (especially in education, civil, legal, medical and industrial settings) and better facilities for recruiting, training and accrediting sign language interpreters. Regrettably, this has not happened. Because of the increased access to higher education and hence employment in management and the professions, Deaf people's need for access to high quality interpreting has escalated since the ALLP was written, and provision of such interpreting remains one of the greatest unmet needs in the deafness field (Ozolins & Bridge 1999).

Conclusion

This brief summary has highlighted statements about sign language and Deafness in a number of Australian language and (latterly) literacy documents over a twenty-year period. We have seen that there is increasing recognition in these documents of the linguistic status of Auslan and its utility and benefit for personal, social, educational and (perhaps with some reservations in a non-signing workplace) vocational purposes. Parallel with this has been the emergence of a more self-aware and sophisticated Deaf community increasingly aware of its history, language and unique culture.

Whether these developments would have taken place without the impetus of their recognition in policy documents is difficult to tell. Similar developments were taking place overseas at the same time and Deaf people and their hearing allies were aware of these developments and were lobbying for their implementation in this country. No doubt the recognition of these matters and their advocacy in official policy documents strengthened the confidence of these advocates and hastened the development of understandings and attitudes that might otherwise have been slower in coming about. Institutions are slower to move than understandings, and undoubtedly there is more to be done to enable the deeper understanding of Deaf people as a linguistic and cultural minority and the programmatic implications of such an understanding by governments and other community agencies.

Indicative of the slowness of cultures to move (and, in fact, a good demonstration of how they can move in opposite directions at the same time!), is that, in the last ten years or so in Australia, coincident with this increased understanding of Deafness as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, there has been an 'oral revival' and the initiation of programs that deny any benefit of any kind of signing in the education of deaf children, and which even advocate the use of 'unisensory' approaches which strongly emphasise the reliance on audition as much as possible – the so-called 'auditory-verbal method'. Fuelled in large part by media publicity for the 'bionic ear' (the cochlear implant, which bypasses the damaged cochlea to directly stimulate the auditory nerve with a simulation of sound), such programs are promising parents and the public the 'normalising' of deaf children and their inclusion in regular education settings. Such 'normalisation' apparently consists of making deaf children (and by inference, these children as adults) as 'hearing-like' as possible.

Whether the promises of normalisation promised by these programs can be delivered for a significant number of early-life profoundly deaf children is doubtful. Evidence is beginning to emerge that the proportion of students 'normalised' by such programs is nowhere as high as its proponents would have parents and the media believe. Undoubtedly it is not easy to be Deaf and signing in a hearing and non-signing world that largely does not understand your aspirations, but whether it is desirable or even possible Power & Hyde 1997) to make over deaf children as 'hearing' ones is ethically problematic when an interesting and useful life can be constructed by deaf children who grow up to be Deaf (Hyde & Power 2000; Power 1997).

Notes

1 I assume the now common convention of using a capital 'D' when referring to people who regard themselves as members of the Deaf community as a cultural and linguistic minority. I use a lower case 'd' when referring to the medical condition of having impaired hearing (Power 1997).

2 For an extreme version of most of these positions, see Van Uden (1986). For a critical review, see Stokoe (1987).

3 Australia's sign language has become known as Auslan - AUStralian Sign LANguage. The term was invented and popularised by Johnston (1989). I have suggested 'Strinesign', but it does not seem to have gained wide favour!

4 But, because of their nature, sign languages are relatively more iconic than spoken languages; the hands can more easily mimic the shape of an object than the voice can (but see Power 1997).

5 Most countries with systems of education of the deaf have developed ASSs. Thus one can speak of Signed Swedish, Signed Hindi, and so on, as well as Signed English(es). There are different varieties of Signed English in Australasia, Britain and the United States (where there are three major competing systems!).

6 I am for present purposes not considering the arguments of those 'oralist' educators of the deaf who would deny any use of signing in education, particularly in the early years (see Power & Hyde 1997).

7 The report made favourable mention of the program at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education (now the Faculty of Education at Griffith University) and recommends it as the possible site for such a program. It hasn't happened!

8 'Verbal' languages are more accurately 'vocal' languages - sign languages are just as 'verbal' as spoken ones.

9 It is not clear that the distinction between Signed English and Auslan is being recognised here.

10 Regrettably, this is an aspiration that, at the beginning of 2000, has not been achieved.

11 Brisbane College of Advanced Education Mt Gravatt, now Griffith University Faculty of Education, gets a mention again!

12 Many commentators see Auslan as the 'first' or 'native' language of deaf students from hearing English-speaking families. This seems to me to be taking it too far - 'easiest language to learn' - yes, but in what sense Auslan could be seen to be a first or native language for children whose families do not use it seems problematic. However, this may not matter - the argument for using Auslan for all deaf students as the easiest and most accessible language for them to communicate and learn in seems substantial.

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Imprisoned by a landmark narrative? Student/teacher ratios and the making of policy

Merilyn Childs

It has become commonplace for educators in Australia to feel alienated and disenchanted with educational policy-making, and policies that appear to be handed down 'from above'. At one level, this structural view of policy-making reflects alienation between policy-makers and practitioners at the sharp edge of practice, but does it adequately provide a means by which the complex processes of policy-making can be understood? This chapter considers the issue of policy-making by drawing on a case study of what is arguably a landmark narrative: the need for 'low' student/teacher ratios in language and literacy programs in Australia during the past two decades.

When Birnbaum (1998) proposed that 'policy scholars are from Venus' and 'policy-makers are from Mars', he did so in order to highlight the debates that currently exist about the making and shaping of policy. The questions that underpin this debate are: what is public policy?; who shapes and makes it?; and, what is the link between policy-making and everyday life? A structural answer to this question might propose that policies are developed by government bodies or corporate leaders as a rational set of rules to guide action by those 'below'. It suggests a 'rational perspective' of institutional governance that assumes systematic, ordered rule-making processes developed at the head of a hierarchy (Holm 1998). This concept of policy foregrounds the role of decision-making done by 'officials' (Forward 1974) who adopt what might be seen as a traditional fatherly and paternalistic role by guiding the public, for their own good, in autocratic ways.

Thinking about policy in this way is limited. It does not provide sufficient scope for understanding the way in which policies are developed as a political process at the nexus of many and often contradictory pressures. Worse, it diminishes the power of social actors, who see themselves as outside the policy loop, to shape, interrogate and resist policy and regulation. Nor does it account for the phenomenon that Hawker, Smith and Weller (1979) argue is so much a part of the policy process. That is, the haphazard nature of 'unintended outcomes' (p 23) that occur as a result of, and often despite, the most ordered of policy processes. While the influences that define policy waver and vary over time 'shaped by the larger patterns of political life' (Considine 1994: 1), the process of policy-making invariably includes the politics of practice as well as the politics of political parties and ideologies. It is, in other words, a social practice that reflects 'bigger social questions' (Considine 1994: 3) as well as smaller social actions. Thus, I prefer to use Anderson's argument that policy is 'a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern' (1990: 5). I qualify this view by acknowledging that 'purposive action' is multifaceted, sometimes accidental, is certainly changing and at times chaotic, despite its rational garb and 'green' or 'white' paper status. I also see that a 'set of actors' extends beyond officials in the government to include the cultural knowledge and practices of educators over time.

Language and literacy policies developed throughout the past two decades have been imbued by, and made use of, changing cultural practices. Other writers in this book have discussed the relationships that have existed between policy and language, literacy and numeracy practices as well as the debates that have been shaped and informed these developments. Of importance to this chapter is the emergence during the past two decades of what can be described as a 'landmark' narrative (Lee & Ermann 1999) - the need for 'low' student/teacher ratios in adult language and literacy classes. A 'landmark' narrative is a strong story or theme that helps us understand something of the rituals, values and beliefs, approaches to pedagogy, and attitudes to learners of particular times. One such story noticeable during the 1980s was that access to language and literacy education was a right not a privilege. Another was that literacy learning 'raised self-esteem'. The 'low' student/teacher ratios narrative was another such story. It began in the early 1970s and continued throughout the twentieth century, and across generations of educators, students and policy-makers. Consequently, it exemplifies the power of the politics of practice in the shaping of policy.

A case study: Student/teacher ratios as a landmark narrative

A number of years ago, the Research Centre for Learning and Social Transformation (University of Western Sydney) was commissioned to conduct a national investigation into the state of student/teacher ratios in literacy and language programs, and to complement the research with historic and international insights. Whilst the explicit aim was to establish the state of student/teacher ratios across Australia, the implicit hope on the part of the organisation commissioning the research was that the study would assert the critical importance of low student/teacher ratios to effective language and literacy learning programs. The impetus for the research was the threat posed to ratios by the gaze of policy-makers who were involved in making institutional policies under the ideology of competition and productivity. The paucity of public money and pressure to rationalise had meant that the high resource costs of student/teacher ratios were being questioned.

The research that was subsequently conducted required considerable sensitivity, given that student/teacher ratios was both an educational as well as an industrial issue. This wariness extended to our process of writing the initial report (Childs & Rolfe 1997) and indeed, was a troubling issue during the writing of this chapter. Should I raise the issue of student/teacher ratios in a book on policy, I wondered. Does such a public discussion further threaten an already vulnerable field of practice facing reduced resources and labour market pressures? The experience of asking these and similar questions reinforced my view that student/teacher ratios had assumed the rhetorical power of a sacred cow, and as such had been elevated to a landmark narrative, that is, a story with power and importance. The logic of this 'cow' was that student/teacher ratios, especially in adult literacy classes, must be 'low'. As we were to establish during the research project, this narrative was so powerful that it had influenced government and institutional policy for three decades.

Our research was preceded by Quirk's (1996) investigation into the process of setting broad student/teacher ratios in technical and further education colleges in New South Wales. Quirk found that a complex web of mechanisms was used to underpin the process of establishing student/teacher ratios across the range of education and training programs in TAFE colleges. Consultation with management, consideration for safety, the limitations of resources, the special and varied nature of student needs, and the special needs of particular curricula, were all cited as significant in this process (Quirk 1996: 41, 48). A stark contrast could be made between special needs classrooms, such as adult literacy for beginners (a student to teacher ratio of 8–10:1), English speakers of other languages (14–20:1), students with special learning difficulties or hearing impaired (3–5:1), and classes that were vocationally based which could be up to 60:1 for theory only classes (p 43).

Quirk's research provided one hint of the pressure that was to come for educators required to justify student/teacher ratios without relying only on the historic argument of 'because we've always done it that way' or 'because it meets student needs'. This pressure exposed language and literacy programs to interrogation, given that they, more than any other program, had high costs associated with relatively low student/teacher numbers. Why did these programs need such high levels of resourcing? Why was it that by comparison workplace language and literacy programs sometimes saw no need to insist on ratios? How was it that tutorial support – where a literacy teacher was involved in team teaching with a vocational teacher – was happy to rely on the ratios of vocational programs? Why did such variation exist between literacy ratios and language ratios? No coherent body of knowledge could be drawn on to address these policy questions.

The search for a reasoned rationale

The study that informed this chapter aimed to describe the practices of student/teacher ratios in adult literacy and language programs in Australia, to develop a reasoned rationale for these practices, and to consider their history. It was specifically intended as a key strategy in the process of shaping institutional policy. Examining ratios was what Considine (1994: 10) called a 'typical starting point' in the policy-making process, in that it represented a key factor in service provision. Data was collected from public and private providers in every state and territory throughout Australia about ratios used to resource the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA), the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE), Reading and Writing for Adults (RAWFA), and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Informants included TAFE colleges, Skillshare, correctional centres, community education centres, and private providers, or the equivalent depending on local arrangements (for example, senior colleges in the Northern Territory and the Institute of Adult Education in Tasmania). Data collection was conducted through phone interviews, with policy advisers where possible. Respondents were also asked to explain the rationale used to justify student/teacher ratios. Comprehensive tables were developed to describe the data collected (Childs & Rolfe 1997).

Data was also collected about ratios in the United Kingdom, North America, Canada and New Zealand. In addition, as we wanted to build knowledge of the history of ratios in New South Wales, we conducted ten in-depth interviews with key informants who had been involved in policy development throughout the early 1980s and through the 1990s. A literature search was conducted in an attempt to establish the efficacy of student/teacher ratios as a factor in learning success in adult literacy and language programs. This search was later expanded to include small group learning as a generic factor in adult learning.

The research was limited as it was designed to investigate the lived experience of student/teacher ratios within their actual institutional settings and to attempt to establish a scholarly basis for ratios. It did not extend to an analysis of policy documents developed at the level of peak bodies such as the Australian Council for Adult Literacy.

The research developed a number of insights about student/teacher ratios in adult language and literacy programs. This chapter focuses attention on analysis of these insights rather than providing a critical review of the research evidence, and for this reason the data will be summarised at various points in the following discussion, rather than described.

In general, overwhelming national and international evidence suggested that a belief in 'low' student/teacher ratios had been used to guide the creation of adult language and literacy programs in western educational programs for the past thirty years. This practice originated in the 1970s, and grew out of a historic view of the literacy learner. We found no evidence of systematic research to establish the efficacy of this practice, nor research that explored optimum class size in adult learning contexts. The research focused attention on three issues.

1 'Low' but varied ratios

Firstly, although respondents believed in the importance of 'low' ratios, and also believed they used 'low' ratios, in practice the definition of 'low' varied widely. Although it was the case that they were generally 'low', this varied across Australia from 1:1 to 15:1. Some ratios were as high as 25:1 and were still being referred to as 'low'. In effect, there was no agreement across Australia about what constituted an optimum class size for language and literacy programs, even if there was agreement that 'low' ratios were better for students to ensure their success, and that such ratios were designed to meet 'client needs' or 'client demands'. Ratios were invariably governed by policy and therefore often reflected different policies established by different policy-making systems, compounded during the past decade by the local impact of government funding priorities.

Factors other than 'client needs' also determined class sizes. For example, there was a tendency for programs in correctional centres to have consistent class sizes of 6–10:1 based on prisoner security ratings and the demand caused by continuous and changing enrolments. In the Northern Territory and areas of South Australia and Tasmania, where programs were affected by geographic isolation, ratios were often between 1:1 and 6:1. Where volunteer tutors provided provision, it was invariably 1:1. A funding formula was sometimes used to define ratios. For example, in Victorian Colleges of Advanced Education, the funding formula meant that ESOL and literacy classes were 20:1, and 'cost effectiveness' meant one private provider had ratios of 10–15:1 while another had 15–20:1. Autonomy in TAFE colleges in Queensland meant that variation existed across the one institution from 8:1 through to 25:1, and in some community groups conducting outreach programs, the ratio was as high as 40:1. Even in this case 'client demand' was cited as the basis for ratios.

2 The lack of systematic research

Secondly, there was an almost complete absence of systematic research, either now or in the past, to support the view that low ratios is a critical factor in adult language and literacy learning success. We identified few research projects that did in fact investigate this link. As we conducted the search we gained the cumulative impression that it was much more common for educational researchers to be concerned with theoretical frameworks, the professional skills of the teacher, the profile of the student, and the utilisation of resources, as the significant factors contributing to academic and learning success. There were some findings worth reporting here however, and these foregrounded the efficacy of small class sizes, given certain other variables.

Two areas of educational research were identified to assist in providing a research base, and both were chosen because of their strategic use for the research project,

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rather than on the basis that there was a direct research link. The first was 'reading readiness' research (based on child literacy learners) that argued that children with literacy difficulties require small class sizes to better develop micro-skills. The literature is very much influenced by behavioural and skills-based approaches to reading readiness. The second was 'group process' research for adult learners which documented the efficacy of small group learning processes. Neither areas of research, however, provided useful definitions of what constituted a 'small group', although clearly this body of knowledge could be drawn on to argue the importance of small groups for any learning, including language and literacy provision, although not for optimum size.

In Australia, a study conducted by the Adult Literacy Information Office (Black & Sim 1990) reported the views of former adult literacy students about their learning experiences in adult basic education classes. This report expressed the view that the 6:1 student/teacher ratio for RAWFA classes was the most appropriate. Higher ratios in these classes was considered unacceptable by participating students and contributed to the dropout rate. We viewed this finding with considerable caution, however, as the students had not had exposure to any other kind of learning process, and therefore were confirming what they were familiar with, and felt loyalty to.

Lending weight to the notion of 'appropriate' sizes was a body of evidence to support smaller class sizes, provided the instruction was designed to take advantage of the smaller class size and if the smaller class size was appropriately managed (Boyer 1995). Research findings advocate that small group work increases cognitive and affective student outcomes (Soled & Bosman 1992). Small groups allow for greater amounts of student participation and interaction, greater attention by the teacher to task relevance through individual and self-paced learning programs, more feedback, greater attention by the teacher to students' understanding, and the adoption of delivery methods to meet student needs. Smaller student/teacher ratios were advocated for a wide variety of programs ranging from those designed to improve children's chances of early success at kindergarten level (Graham 1996; Anderson 1999) through to dropout prevention programs for at-risk youth, and as a key aspect of effective teaching (Luckert 1999). The benefits to students of a small-group learning environment have been reported, including the causal link between small groups and student achievement in cooperative learning classrooms (Slavin 1990; Johnson & Johnson 1994).

The literature supported the view that small group learning was efficacious (see for example Cross 1980; Brookfield 1986; Johnson & Johnson 1994). A link between smaller class size and a caring atmosphere was established (Hofman 1994). The body of literature on small class groupings – which is not the same as low class sizes – repeatedly argued that group sizes needed to be small enough to enable facilitators to nurture and support students. The problem with these statements about the efficacy of small group learning is that they could be taken as critical factors to *any*

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learning environment, not just the learning environments of literacy and language learners.

In stark contrast, we found one continuing tradition in the United Kingdom that focused on language and literacy learning as a *social action outcome* rather than a skills outcome of community education and community action programs. In these programs ratios were not likely to be considered, and the student/teacher ratio was determined by the purpose of the community action, for example, the number of people who turn up to a community hall to learn how to write a petition. We were told by one informant: 'We advertise that we are going to help a community do something, like write a petition, and then we turn up, and they turn up, and we might have a hall full of people. We work with whatever happens'. This suggested that the orthodox view of ratios had been developed with a particular view of the literacy learner, and the contexts of learning.

3 Underlying concepts of the learner and learning

Thirdly, the history of ratios given by the ten key informants suggested that the cultural view of ratios that was generated in the late 1970s grew from a view that learners were personally and intellectually incompetent. They needed special care, counselling and separation from the mainstream, both in curricula and in classroom environments. A glance through journal articles about literacy learning during this era confirms the historic view that the literacy learner was medically, psychologically or socially defective, and adult literacy programs in institutional settings were conceptualised under the rubric of 'special education' and 'counselling'. Here, learners were thought about using fairly primitive biomedical models to interpret their failures as 'problem learners' – a view now eschewed by many scholars and practitioners. This view of learners, which preceded the growth of multiculturalism and related policies in Australia such the rise of English language provision, was further entrenched by the concurrent use of volunteers as a basis for provision, and the view that 1:1 ratios were the most appropriate for lay teachers. It was further encapsulated by the many case studies that were developed during the 1980s, often based on middle class values about what constituted 'normal', that portrayed the 'failed' literacy learners as socially and emotionally disturbed. As one key informant told us: in TAFE colleges in New South Wales 'Adult Basic Education used to be delivered and/or administered by TAFE student counsellors'.

The early development of literacy learning indicated that ratios were fostered as an institutional, 'four walls' pedagogy that reflected a particular set of values about such things as the role of the teacher, the role of literacy learning, and the perceived nature of the student/teacher-learning relationship. As another key informant told us:

> *ABE [Adult Basic Education] clients have diverse needs as learners and these needs are best addressed through individual programs. Students are not able to progress through their program independently and in large groups would be sitting with nothing to do until the teacher could attend to them. There also*

> *needs to be an awareness of the sensitivity of what is being taught and of the learner. Students have a fear of exposure of their perceived weakness.*

Thus, as early as 1978, in one large public institution, the view of the literacy learner as 'special' was embodied in policies governing maths (4–8:1), reading (6–8:1), special learning difficulties (6:1), spelling (8:1) and deaf classes (2–4:1).

Ratios for fledgling English language classes were established in the 1960s, and at this time, as a key informant said: 'All students spent part of their class in a language laboratory. As the laboratory only had twenty booths, the student/teacher ratio for that time was 20:1'. In the 1980s the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) adopted a British Council model of 15:1, and this ratio has since been tested internationally, as a 'marketing asset for Australian English language teaching providers' as one key informant put it. In this instance then, ratios were higher than in literacy classrooms, and this difference has continued to this day. The research indicated that language class ratios were invariably higher than literacy class ratios, and that this occurred regardless of 'levels'.

The underlying assumption that literacy learning is hierarchical and has levels, was another belief associated with the 1970s remedial view of learning. In general, the lower the level of literacy proficiency, the greater the need for small class sizes. (Interestingly, the same belief did not appear to apply to language learning.) The notion of levels has profoundly impacted on the development of competency frameworks such as the National Reporting System which has in turn had significant influence on the development of policy concerning language and literacy, as well as the development of other, related policies.

The heritage of ratios

The landmark narrative of 'low' ratios, embedded in institutional policy and the consciousness of educators, continued to shape policy and practice into the early twenty-first century. Two aspects of this heritage are significant. The continuation of beliefs about student/teacher ratios indicates the resilience of this narrative, despite strong theoretical challenges posed by new conceptual definitions of 'literacy', the rise of cultural sensitivity, and changing teaching environments. Secondly, the contextual origin of the landmark narrative no longer exists. We did not find any language or literacy programs being conducted under the rubric of 'counselling'. Instead, it was most common for programs to be considered as accredited vocational programs, including those conducted in correctional centres and in workplaces. Although 'student need' was the commonly cited rationale, students' needs appeared to be satisfied independently from the actual ratio, which in practice, varied. The heritage of 'low' ratios was in part problematic, in that it was a myth, but it was also contradictory. At one level, 'low' ratios mattered as a cultural expression of the value placed on student needs. At another level it did not appear to matter, as it varied so widely across providers, programs and Australian states.

The heritage of 'low' ratios in New South Wales may well have begun in an educational clinic in 1973 run by a counsellor, and if so, the student/teacher ratios landmark narrative represents a point of continuity over a twenty-year period of policy development. This point of continuity extended beyond classroom practices into the material bases of pedagogy and manifested in architectural design and classroom environments. It was common for Adult Basic Education centres in the early 1980s to be designed to accommodate small groups of learners, clustered together in separate and discretely located spaces, and these classrooms are still in use today, and often continue to have separate tea and coffee making facilities. Here there is access to intimate environments that are rarely seen, or encouraged, in other adult learning environments, including language and literacy workplace programs.

The sheer weight of cultural beliefs about student/teacher ratios has meant that a late 1970s biomedical and remedial model of literacy learning has dominated policy. It is not surprising then, that aggressive versions of this model have found their way fairly easily into testing-oriented and behaviouristic policies of the Howard Liberal government. Although it is tempting to see this emphasis as 'top down' and uninformed, the current popularity of policy that relies on an ideology of individual pathology segues easily with pre-existing beliefs about student/teacher ratios accompanied by a hierarchical view of learning. I well recall a policy briefing session I attended in Sydney in 1998 about mutual obligation funding. By the end of two hours, the language and literacy providers who attended the meeting had adopted the phraseology of the policy-makers. Prospective students were being called 'level oners' and 'level twoers' (drawing on the National Reporting System, the report mechanism adopted by the policy) and any attempt to refer to 'literacy learning needs' on the part of learners had been abandoned for the preferred policy expression 'literacy problems'. It seems to make linguistic sense to talk about 'levels' and 'problems', and to adopt teaching, assessment and policy strategies that reflect this historic world view. This acts as a 'bottom up' confirmation of the 'rightness' of policy. Acquiescence – active and passive – has helped shape an emerging contemporary landmark narrative. No longer 'a right' and certainly not 'a privilege', language and literacy learning has become 'an individual obligation'. Classrooms are transformed into learning enforcement sites, educators into agents of enforcement and learners into almost prisoners of policy.

Imprisoned by a landmark narrative?

The case of student/teacher ratios discussed in this chapter, suggests that the politics of practice can be a powerful informant in the policy-making process, even though the practice itself may lack a strong basis in research. Social actors of the past haunt current public policy, and the heritage of their work can be seen in the continuation of such practices as student/teacher ratios. Perhaps they did not intend to create a social practice that would become rigid over time, elevated to policy and valorised as unquestionable. If 'effective client outcomes' (the 1990s-speak for student needs) continues to be the aim of language and literacy policy and practice, then it may be that landmark narratives, such as low student/teacher ratios, imprison contemporary educators in the visions formulated by the past.

At times, as in the case of student/teacher ratios, the shaping of policies have been predicated on historic cultural values that, for a whole range of reasons, continue to have appeal to current generations of educators. Although 'small' means different things in different states and programs and to different employers, the desire to maintain small class sizes reflects a 1970s construction of literacy learning and the literacy learner, but may be attractive in today's teaching and learning environment for other reasons. However, the values, on which low student/teacher ratios were originally based, sit comfortably with an ideology that blames the victim. The tail of our own scorpion has come to sting our students, and to re-influence policy. The almost universal western educational belief in the importance of 'low' ratios as a way of enhancing learning success through the various 'levels' of learning, and to improve self-esteem has, ironically, impoverished the pursuit of alternatives. A belief in the individual, discrete and separate human body, the product of a modernist western society, has provided the focal point for individual enrichment. But it has been manifestly unable to consider community-embedded literacies, or to respond to the challenges posed by the concept of social literacies that arguably have nothing much to do with classrooms, levels or ratios except through an individualised textual representation.

Understanding ratios as an everyday cultural expression of a previous era, provides a way of rethinking contemporary educational change. Rather than seeing policy as 'top down', ratios indicate that policy-making has been a spiralling process over time. By understanding the power of our own assumptions, and the way these have shaped policies in the past and echo into the present and the future, we can begin to understand the powerful process of policy-making at the nexus of governments, institutions and everyday life. The problems posed by the policies that drive the open training market (a system whereby public and private organisations compete for public funding to provide education and training) are not separate or disconnected from the problems of practice. The sense of powerlessness and alienation that has been the hallmark of policy-making during the Howard–Kemp era has grown from the contradictions inherent in the languages and literacy fields. As Seddon suggests in a related discussion, the problem of change challenges us not only to recognise the rich contexts that shape change but also to acknowledge preferred and possible futures (1997: 243).

A 'top down' view of policy inhibits the imaginative process and leads to collective blindness and amnesia about the defining presence of past policy activists, re-invigorated through current policies. In effect, the cumulative knowledge and policies that were built in the past by our peers, working as policy activists, can blind us to new insights. What if policies that embedded the value of 'low' student/teacher ratios and hierarchical levels were wrong? What student/teacher ratios might support learning in a critical literacy paradigm? What are we unable to do within the current narrative? What alternatives make sense? What if current policy-makers, wanting to create leverage in student/teacher ratios, have a point? How do we develop evidence-based practices to assist us in finding new answers to these questions without being driven solely by ever-greater pressures towards productivity gains and cost cutting measures? These questions press us to understand the need to return to the first step in the classic policy and problem-solving loop: define the problem.

Despite my continued unease at initiating such an open discussion about student/teacher ratios at a time when the viability of education is so clearly under threat, nevertheless these questions must be confronted, for they represent the everyday reality of systemic reforms. As I argue at the beginning of this chapter, student/teacher ratios are one of the 'smaller social actions' that shape policy from below over time. It is through these actions that new landmark narratives can be imagined and enacted. Voicing, questioning and re-defining the problem may at the same time provide an opportunity to imagine new approaches to language and literacy provision. Changing policy contexts in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century are placing pressure on language and literacy provision and educators, but they should be, at the same time, fostering the re-authoring of new policies and practices.

15 Ideologies, languages, policies: Australia's ambivalent relationship with learning to communicate in 'other' languages

Angela Scarino and Leo Papademetre

Introduction

The acceptance of the *National Policy on Languages* in 1987 constituted a high point in the history of policy development for languages at a pan-Australian level (Lo Bianco 1987). In the past 12 years, however, there has been a move from a philosophy of linguistic and cultural pluralism advocated in that policy to an imposed strong emphasis on:

- English as the dominant language of Australia as advocated in the document *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (published by the Department of Employment, Education and Training in 1991 and released by the then Minister, John Dawkins) and a continuing stream of documents since then; and
- four Asian languages as advocated in the report *Asian languages and Australia's economic future* commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 1994.

In this chapter, a critical, though not detailed, analysis of the past 12 years of Australian policy development in languages and cultures is presented. This analysis applies mainly to languages education in schools as implemented through the curriculum, and illustrates the government's intentional shift of emphasis in language policy. This shift is in all matters concerning languages and cultures learning and teaching, signalling a recession in educational ideology. For, the underlying values and assumptions in current educational policy-making in general, and languages policy-making in particular, are not conducive to a coherent, long-term policy that would ensure a quality educational experience for all students at a time when, arguably, it is needed more than ever before. Despite the fact that the move towards the interdependence of nations in all social spheres is continuously emphasised by the state as a positive goal for people who live and work in environments in which they have to use a variety of languages and engage with a variety of cultures, educational policy-makers and systems undermine the emphasis on developing capabilities for using languages and on developing an understanding of diverse cultures and their value systems. As links between nations grow closer in our internationalised society towards greater international exchange of knowledge for the common good, weathervane political thinking based on short-term economic gains undervalues learning languages as an integral part of an increasing intercultural awareness, collaboration and mutual benefits in the life of the individual and the collective in the Australian society.

As the process of policy construction, however, is not value free, so too is policy analysis. The selection and interpretation of data for analysis is influenced by the role, experience, perspective and values of the person undertaking the analysis. In common with most contexts of policy-making, values and ideologies influence policy-making in Australia to a significant degree. The following analysis and interpretation of some of the key events in languages policy development and its implementation in the school curriculum will refer to policy development and implementation nationally, drawing attention to the local manifestations in each state when necessary.

Appendices 1 and 2 give a summary of the major steps and shifts in the construction of language policy.)

The National Policy on Languages

The 1987 *National Policy on Languages* (NPL) was a comprehensive statement structured around four goals: English for all; support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages; a language other than English for all; and equitable and widespread languages services. It proposed the conservation, development and expansion of Australia's linguistic resources, relating languages with national economic, social and cultural policies, and the provision of information and services in languages understood by the community. The rationale for languages was framed around four social goals: cultural and intellectual enrichment; vocational and employment opportunities in foreign trade for economic growth; social equity and justice in overcoming disadvantage for all; Australia's role in the region and the world as a model of a multicultural society with valued and implemented multilingualism in all social spheres (Lo Bianco 1987: 44).

The policy's fundamental message was based on the intrinsic value of languages as resources for making and exchanging meaning, experience and knowledge, and the need for all members of the community to extend their linguistic resources for the common social good. It was a policy that engaged with the notion of difference or otherness. It highlighted the connections or relationships among the various areas of languages policy development, for example the relationship between languages and cultures; the relationships between literacy in English, English as a Second Language (ESL) and languages; and the relationship between social, cultural, economic, and political purposes for languages. As such, this policy provided a catalyst for languages policy development in each state and territory.

In 1986 the National Survey of Language Learning in Australian Schools (Department of Education 1986) indicated that only one quarter of schools throughout Australia provided languages in the curriculum and the number of students taking a language at Year 12 had declined from around 40 per cent in the 1960s to about 11 per cent. In 1989 the then Australian Education Council, the conference of ministers of education and the directors of education in each state and territory, included languages as a key learning area in the Common and Agreed Goals of Schooling, a move which was no doubt related to the influence of the NPL.

The Australian Language and Literacy Policy

In 1991 the federal Department of Employment, Education and Training under Minister Dawkins adopted a changed policy through a published document entitled *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) foregrounding boldly the newly perceived singularity of the issue. The goals of this policy can be summarised as follows:

- All Australians should develop and maintain effective literacy in English to enable them to participate in Australian society.
- The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved.
- Those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that are still transmitted should be maintained and developed, and those that are not should be recorded where appropriate.
- Language services provided by interpreters and translators, the print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved.

On the surface these goals appear to retain the major dimensions of the policy brought together under the NPL. Yet, as the title of this policy indicated, there was a marked shift away from the pluralist values of the previous policy towards a hierarchical view of the value of each language to be learned, with English at the top as a signal of a national priority in the construction of a desirable, unifying cultural and linguistic identity in the context of a desired future 'republic'.

In the 1991 policy, pluralism was replaced by economic rationalism which boldly prescribed a move towards what has been described as 'economic assimilationism' for the common good (see Moore 1995a: 14). The new agenda in the government's economic rationalist approach to education dictated a scenario of 'setting priorities'. So, the resulting prioritisation placed literacy in English as the highest 'priority', followed by learning any other language. The policy writers encouraged this choice by

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providing an instrumental criterion: the government's perceived value of that chosen language for international trade as deemed appropriate in the climate of the government's own brand of trade involvement with Australia's north-western neighbours.

This prioritisation led to divisiveness in the educational field of languages and cultures learning and the bureaucratic process of decision-making led to the obliteration of the voices of the teachers and the profession as a whole. The only 'important' voices were those of government managers, businessmen and employers. In the name of government-defined 'efficiency and effectiveness' the previously emphasised interconnected objectives of languages policy were 'simplified.' The result has been a reductionist utilitarianism and short-termism which remains the order of the day to the present time. Thus, by removing the complexity in the way languages policy should always be conceptualised, the constructors of this 1991 policy assumed and proclaimed that the reality of languages policy and its implementation through quality education program delivery is simple, unconditioned, and static. Worse, this attitude-turned-policy reduced the complexity of the diversity of the Australian society by attempting to construct it as an homogenous whole and thus devaluing the reality of its ever-increasing and dynamic linguistic and cultural diversity (see Papademetre 1994).

At the same time as the launch of the ALLP though without a direct relationship, there was the establishment of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) of the Australian Education Council and an attempt to develop national curriculum guidelines, namely, the development of Curriculum Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools in eight key learning areas, including languages. The languages Statement and Profile is emblematic of the shift towards outcomes and accountability frameworks within the economic rationalist paradigm. Major features of the conceptualisation of the languages curriculum embedded in these documents are:

- the increased attention accorded to assessment as opposed to the process of teaching and learning;
- the omission from the outcomes of the important relationship between languages and cultures, and its relationship to learning in general (an omission which yields an impoverished notion of outcomes and of the curriculum);
- the consideration of languages generically and not as specific languages, a simplification which cannot be sustained (see Scarino 1995a, 1995b, 1997, 1998).

The COAG report: Asian languages and Australia's economic future

In December 1992 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established a working group to develop an Asian languages and studies strategy for Australian schools in view of the priorities established by the 1991 policy. The report entitled *Asian languages and Australia's economic future* was endorsed in February 1994, and this led to the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS). The 1994 COAG report became a de facto languages policy, mainly because of the funding which accompanied its release. The report set 'priorities' even more sharply than the 1991 policy, focusing narrowly on and encouraging learning of only four 'Asian' languages: Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean.

The rationale in relation to learning 'Asian' languages was justified exclusively in economic terms, as the title of the report clearly indicates. Such a justification is limited and short-lived since it is based on the ever-changing trade figures and fails to present the educationally-driven rationale which relates to intellectual and cultural benefits of learning languages.

Furthermore, the research base for designating these four 'priority' languages was limited to the input provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that regarded nations and their languages from their dollar-value perspective and thus proclaimed these languages and cultures to be of 'strategic' importance to Australia. So the questions arise: for whom and for what are these languages and cultures strategic?; and, for whom and for what are they beneficial?

With the 1994 COAG report came a new style of policy formulation in terms of setting 'targets', a concept which is tied to the economic rationalist vocabulary. Thus, policy 'targets' were set and recommendations to the government (COAG 1994: ix–x) were made. These recommendations were to:

- endorse the Commonwealth's 1991 target of 25 per cent of Year 12 students studying a second language;
- agree that the target date for achieving 25 per cent be extended from 2000 to 2006;
- agree that this national target be met by having 15 per cent of Year 12 students by that date studying a 'priority' Asian language;
- agree that such quantitative targets must be 'integrated with appropriate qualitative measures capable of assessing proficiency outcomes'.

The reductionist nature of the targets proposed and the failure to engage with the interrelated network of all aspects of the curriculum when constructing and implementing a comprehensive languages policy exposes the mercantile attitude of policy constructors.

This new policy style has markedly influenced state-based policy development in all states and territories, given the significant amount of Commonwealth funding that has accompanied the COAG report. Such an influence is rarely examined through the questions it raises: How realistic are the expectations of government, business and employers that prompt the funding in relation to the mission of schools and education in general? In the interest of increasing numbers of students learning 'trade' languages, is quality education compromised? Why were many states undertaking reviews of policy as the year 2000 'target' date approached?

Since 1994, there has been a policy vacuum at a national level with regard to languages policy. In 1997 an evaluation process was set in motion by the Commonwealth to review the funding provisions for languages given the fact that many funding programs related to scenarios which had long passed. The report *Advancing of Australia's languages* became available on the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs website in 1999. There was no notification to bodies such as the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations that the report was now available, nor was there any invitation to comment, let alone any indication that it might be acted upon.

At the state level, a pattern of review can be observed which signals further questioning of language(s) policy, and the place of languages in the curriculum and education for all children and youth. Evidence from some of the states is as follows:

(i) A review of languages policy and implementation was undertaken in 1996 in South Australia. The outcomes of the review were released for public consultation in the report *Consolidating gains, recovering ground: Languages in South Australia. Report of the review of the teaching languages in the Department for Education and Children's Services* conducted and written by Lo Bianco (1996). A policy statement was to have been released shortly after, though this was to have taken the form of a 'languages plan' rather than a languages policy. The 'plan' has now been published (DETE 2000) but it has not yet been released to schools.

(ii) A review was undertaken in New South Wales in 1997. The report, which allegedly was highly critical of languages policy implementation, and a draft policy which was being proposed have remained with the Minister for Education of that state. There is every indication that these documents will not be released publicly and that there will be no policy process in the immediate future.

(iii) In the Australian Capital Territory an 'audit' of languages in the primary sector has been undertaken but the results are not publicly available, and a similar 'audit' has been undertaken for languages in the secondary sector.

(iv) In 1998 the Northern Territory Department of Education announced the removal of funding for Indigenous bilingual education. In addition, the position of Principal Education Officer – Languages was abolished. As a result of the review of the Curriculum Services Branch there is no longer an officer with responsibility for languages policy in that system. The responsibility for all matters pertaining to languages resides with the School of Languages and there is currently discussion about amalgamating the School of Languages with the Open Education Centre, a concept that would lead to a fragmentation of the languages program.

(v) In Queensland the Rix report on languages was completed – the review was 'internal' and, therefore, was not released. In addition, there is no move now to extend the compulsory study of languages beyond the present position of Years 6, 7 and 8. The Languages and Cultures Unit has been disestablished.

(vi) In Western Australia the 'LOTE (Languages other than English) strategy' was reviewed and redeveloped with limited consultation. This has been replaced by a 'LOTE beyond 2000' statement (Education Department of Western Australia 2001) which focuses on curriculum improvement.

(vii) In Victoria, the state that enjoys the strongest government funding support for languages, a review had been scheduled for 2000 in response to public opposition in some quarters (captured by Andrew Bolt in his article 'A LOTE of nonsense' in August 1998). This, however, has changed with the newly appointed Labor government. While the review will no longer proceed, the community perceptions regarding the value of languages remain and will need to be addressed at some stage.

Another alarming trend relates to the lack of consultation and, in some instances, the lack of transparency in decision-making regarding languages and cultures, particularly in relation to the allocation of funds for the implementation of languages policy.

Since 1997, with the Asian economic crisis, we are in a position to question some of the COAG projections which anticipated expanded trade relations with East Asia, and both Australia and the world becoming increasingly dependent on Asia for access to burgeoning Asian markets and labour markets. Will these and other projections hold? The fact is that the take-up rate for languages at senior secondary level is nowhere near the 25 per cent target recommended in the ALLP and the COAG report. The Commonwealth and state policies have led to an increase in languages learning at primary level but with little flow through to secondary level, and funding for languages beyond those mentioned in the COAG report will remain tenuous.[1]

Literacy policy

At a national level, while there is total silence in the area of languages, policy has been formulated in the related areas of literacy and multiculturalism.

At the April 1998 meeting of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), federal, state and territory ministers agreed to a national benchmark standard in literacy for Years 3 and 5 to enable comparable state level reporting against common standards. The Commonwealth policy paper *Literacy for all. The challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA 1998) affirms the importance of literacy in English for the individual and for economic purposes:

> In Australian society proficiency in English literacy is of major importance for every Australian's personal, social and cultural development. For a modern democratic society, high levels of literacy are crucial to the quality

> of civic, cultural and economic activity. High levels of literacy for all Australians are required so that each individual can deal confidently with the broadening scope and multiple uses of literacy in all spheres of society.

For the political purposes of national development and the wellbeing of the nation's citizens, politicians have seized upon the importance of literacy skills employing a persuasive argument that literacy is good for all. No one can argue against the importance of literacy in English in the Australian context. In the document *Literacy for all*, however, there is no mention of literacy in languages in addition to English, neither in regards to the same benefits as those cited for English, nor in regards to the important relationship between the development of literacy in one's first language and in subsequently learned languages. To deal with such educational relationships is too 'unruly', unnecessarily complex, or too 'inefficient' in economic rationalist terms! (See Minister Dawkins's press release (Dawkins 1991a) which accompanied the release of the ALLP in 1991.)[2]

In April 1998, MCEETYA agreed to release the draft document *Common and agreed goals for schooling in the twenty-first century* for consultation for a period of six months. These goals included languages as one of the curriculum areas of study for all students. The draft document described the 'striking differences' between the 1998 and 1989 versions of the goals as follows (MCEETYA 1998: 3):

> The new goals statement attempts to capture the new curriculum initiatives and directions of school education in recent years, and express them with the outcomes focus of assessment, reporting and accountability which is now an integral part of Australia's educational landscape.

The new 'priority' areas included information technology, vocational education, literacy and numeracy, science and civics and citizenship. Literacy again was conceptualised as an English-only development and there was no indication of a pluralist, intercultural conception of civics and citizenship or international dimensions of vocational education. The preoccupation with outcomes (as opposed to input and learning processes) is even stronger, and the focus on assessment (with no apparent direct relationship to learning) is now totally unquestioned. The conceptualisation of learning in the Australian society is now an outgrowth of economic rationalism whose language has substituted educational discourse.

For each of the goals there would now be a specification of 'targets'. The draft targets for languages and cultures remained those set in the 1994 COAG report. The goal that related to languages is stated as follows (MCEETYA 1998: 7):

> All students should have the knowledge, cultural understanding and skills which respect individuals' freedom to celebrate languages and cultures within a socially cohesive framework of shared values.[3]

Thus in 1998, as was the case 20 years ago, students and teachers are prompted to 'celebrate' diversity, presumably through food and folklore, but are individually free, if so inclined, to do their own cultural thing with no need for genuine engagement with otherness, or with difference or diversity. What is non-negotiable, however, is the 'socially cohesive framework of shared values'. It appears that what is being promoted here is a 'unified' Australian culture (however defined) where other languages and cultures are assimilated without any notion of promoting the possibility of:

- overseas-born Australians incorporating their additional languages and cultures with their Australianness in the public as well as private domains of their lives and work;
- Australians born in Australia engaging daily with otherness; or
- intercultural relationships among the diverse linguistic and cultural groups and subgroups which comprise the nation, being nurtured for the value that such exchange adds to the life and work of the nation.

In the final version of *Australia's common and agreed national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century* published in 1999, languages have been retained as a key learning area, but in fact targets are not to be set for this area, because, in economic rationalistic terms, it follows that if targets were defined then funding would need to follow. So, targets and their funding are reserved for the 'priority' areas only.

Thus, ministerial commitment to languages becomes relevant when a political imperative prompts it. We believe that the 1998 government allocation of $90 million of the federal budget over the following three years to those languages supported by COAG, was motivated by the government's desire to respond to the community's backlash against Pauline Hanson's One Nation agenda. Political expediency remains the modus operandi in every governmental re-action in all matters of language learning in Australia.

Multicultural policy

The attitude of 'tolerance' of 'other-cultures' without 'engagement' with 'other-languages' follows clearly from a programmatic 'issues paper' entitled *Multicultural Australia: The way forward* published in 1997 by a National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) under the aegis of the Minister for Immigration. In that document we are instructed as follows (NMAC 1997: 10):

> Cultural background is not a special feature of human life; it is just one aspect of the private lives of people and culture cannot be given a special place... [Some people argue that] an individual's language and culture will shape his or her identity, but see this as strictly a private affair.

The whole discussion in this document sets the tone of 'tolerance' and provides a 'benevolent' rationale for the need for a 'socially cohesive framework of shared values' (NMAC 1997: 3, 7, 10; my emphasis):

> Since the 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, there has been *a gradual shift* in the emphases of the three key areas of multicultural policy set out in the National Agenda... It is particularly important to examine *the*

> *core values and principles* which Australians support and *share as a community*... Our multicultural policy should reflect those Australian core values which are central to Australia's liberal democratic traditions and whose relevance is timeless... The Council's primary task [is] to recommend *a framework* aimed at ensuring that cultural diversity is *a unifying force*...

Thus the construction of a 'socially cohesive' nation was firstly established in December 1997 through a governmental credo – camouflaged as an 'issues paper' – prepared by a National Multicultural Advisory Council, whose members were presumably selected by the government, and then used as a blueprint for subsequent programmatic recommendations for languages and cultures education. The key word in both the NMAC 1997 multicultural paper and the MCEETYA 1998/1999 literacy paper is 'unity'. Far from being an issues paper and providing the foundation for a new policy statement about engaging with pluralism, the NMAC 1997 paper deals mainly with the perspective of the conservative critics of multiculturalism. What is highlighted is an outmoded notion of 'core values' and the 'celebration' of diversity'. The economic benefits are highlighted first, with social and cultural benefits being secondary.

> Some say that our traditional values of respect for individual freedoms and giving everyone a fair go have disposed us to accept differences. In other words, it is our traditional Australian values that underpin multicultural policy and that is why Australians are generally able to accept people whose cultures include different traditions. (NMAC 1997: 10)

Joseph Lo Bianco (1998b: 1), the author of the NPL, critically observes that:

> ...there is an underlying tone [in this 1997 paper] that suggests that ethnic communities may have too successfully gotten into the act, and that folk – and celebratory pluralism are all very well but the delivery of resources perhaps should not be ethnic-specific... [This] 1997 paper deals mainly with vocabulary, and discourse, how to frame and name entities that make up the cultural nation, how to preserve the unitary nature of the political nation, how to assuage concern among 'older Australians' about their place.

Another scholar, Laksiri Jayasuriya (1998: 4), further notes that:

> ...the persistent need of conservative theorists to ensure 'social cohesion' represents none other than a demand for social conformity, a need to ensure that we are not a 'nation of tribes' but 'One Nation' unified by cultural homogeneity and/or an adherence to the core values of the 'nation' – the 'imagined community' created under the guise of multiculturalism.

It is indeed an indication of the regression in state ideology on the issue of diversity of languages and cultures that in May 1999 the National Multicultural Advisory Council published its final version of the discussion paper in a paper entitled *Australian multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness*. In this paper (NMAC 1999) end-of-the-millennium ideological positions are provided for us again:

> Multiculturalism in its inclusive sense is crucial to our developing *nationhood* and Australian identity. It should emphasise the things that *unite* us as a people – our common membership of the Australian community; our shared desire for social harmony; the benefits of our diversity; our evolving *national character* and identity. (my emphasis, p 4)

In the absence of a discussion on the benefits of multilingualism in the construction of such an Australian-flavoured 'multiculturalism' it is unlikely that a rich conceptualisation of languages and cultures policy and its application in education can emerge. For, as it has so often been indicated before:

> In Australia the identity or strong connection between culture and language is not sufficiently appreciated either in discussions on multiculturalism or in the educational policy and practice. All too often, language is conceived in its logical universalist component, and thus the importance of linguistic pluralism is under emphasised, neglected or, more simply, 'repressed'... Multicultural and multilingual policies are working merely as transitional measures that only serve to delay the process of assimilation that will fatally confront the second and third generations. In the final analysis, multilingualism in Australia is a weak and transitional phenomenon. (Schiavoni 1992: 39–41)

and,

> Indeed it could be argued that multiculturalism has come to mean a socio-political doctrine of tolerance... It has become clear that we will not be able to teach all languages at any given time within the major public teaching structures that are directly funded by government, whether at national or state level... I mention the example of language, specifically since I see the language question as pivotal to any multicultural policy and to any programme that is informed by an ethnic constituency. (Papadopoulos 1992: 46–48)

Summary

In summary, in the past 12 years of languages policy – and the related statements on literacy and multiculturalism – and its implementation through the school curriculum there has been a major ideological retreat from a commitment to pluralism to an increasingly strong economic rationalist base to policy construction and a lack of willingness to engage with otherness and its many languages at a time when the potential for international movement and exchange is greater and easier than ever before.

What matters in Australia at the moment is basic literacy in English for all: one language, one culture, one system of values, one nation! The fact that we live and work in a technologically advanced, knowledge-based and increasingly internationalised society – where a capability for using languages for communicating across cultures should be continually valued and promoted – seems to escape the rhetoric of the advisory committees selected by the government to express its monolingual attitudes and the values attached to them. When they construct their funding budgets, the economically driven constructors of sociocultural and educational values regard diverse linguistic capabilities of Australian youth as not essential to education.

Therefore, in Australia, the issue of learning and teaching languages and cultures remains bound to its sociopolitical foundations of economic assimilationism camouflaged through the pretensions of the rhetoric of 'inclusiveness' in the name of the consumer brand 'Australian- multiculturalism-for-all'.

Such sociopolitical rhetoric stems from an educational ideology that rejects the basic tenets of intercultural and international education, and engenders short-sighted policies which are seldom debated openly or, as in recent times, are shelved as 'complicated' when finally published. Constructive criticism never reaches the people whom the policies are intended to affect and remains relegated to the domain of research and scholarship for the benefit of other scholars who happen to meet at scholarly conferences and provide each other references in journals locked in institutional libraries (see Papademetre 1998). Here is an example of scholarly criticism which teachers of languages, their students and these students' parents are not accustomed to engage with in the context of their involvement with school curricula that increasingly deprivilege language learning:

> [The 1991 policy] aims for control by creating 'a coherent whole' and setting priorities – literacy and some 'foreign languages' – thus abandoning the [previous 1987 policy's] search for principled consensus and commonly shared goods... English is tied to education and jobs, and 'Asian' languages to trade, narrowing to instrumentalism the [previous 1987 policy's] commitment to multiple values for languages, and mythologising literacy as a solution to unemployment and 'Asians' as holders of wealth. (Moore 1995a:15)

Independent scholarly research on languages education issues becomes relevant only if it expedites the short-term political agenda, and if it does not engage the affected populace in any kind of public debate about the role of languages and cultures at all levels of education.

On the other hand, official shifts in the states' ideology on languages education is disguised through the commissioning of reports on languages education which provide the government officials with the circular incentive to change the policy currently in place and justify the changes on assumptions made even about the current situation in schools. The unwary teacher, student and parent are forced to accept these changes as fait accompli.

Thus, policy rewriting since 1987 has been an expedient method of being perceived as 'engaged with the issue', giving support to the argument that:

> Policy is...an 'economy of power', a set of technologies and practices which are realised and struggled over in local settings. Policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended... Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. (Ball 1994a: 10)

Or, as the social anthropologist, Gillian Bottomley (1992: 49) has observed:

> Australia's official policy of multiculturalism advances a kind of repressive tolerance towards cultural practices of the large immigrant population... Australian policy-makers have been remarkably successful in incorporating the large non-Anglophone population relatively peacefully. The current, or most recent, policy [on] multiculturalism, basically attaches ethnic 'groups' or 'communities' to the state by means of representatives, usually middle-class men... One could argue that assimilation or integration in Australia means coming to accept cultural forms generated by structures of class and gender, rather than by ethnicity.

In the present political climate of constantly revised multiculturalism that views multilingualism for every Australian child as promoting social division and costing extra dollars in the collective effort to build the nation, revisions of the federal and state policies on languages and cultures education are grounded in and by the ideology of silence in engaging unambivalently with the philosophy of linguistic and sociocultural pluralism advocated in the 1987 *National Policy on Languages*.

Notes

1 Statistical details are available from the Department of Education in each state and territory.

2 Note Dawkins's comments (Dawkins 1991a: 1) in launching the ALLP:

> This policy brings together a number of strands of policy that have been separately administered, separately put together in the past and now this is our attempt to try and make a coherent whole out of these various strands of policy and various programs. And the starting point is that Australia is a nation of many cultures but Australia has but one national language, that being Australian English. Despite the fact that that's a fairly controversial statement, it remains the case that many Australians do not read and write English very well and many Australians do not even speak it. And that has, of course, enormous implications for those

> individuals in terms of their ability to participate in the education and training systems and, perhaps as much as anything, their ability to participate in the wider life of the nation including its democratic institutions.

But, whose voices make up the 'our' in 'our attempt'? Who defines the 'coherent whole'? What was incoherent about the whole that this new whole was replacing? What is implied by the 'but' used in the oppositional phrase 'Australia is a nation of many cultures **but** Australia has **but** one national language'. Are speakers of other languages now identified as those who have a problem in that they don't speak English very well? Are they no longer seen as contributors to the national pool of linguistic resources? Who is the minister including or excluding when he appeals to 'democracy'?

3 In the final version (1999) of the document *Australia's common and agreed national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century*, this statement has been changed to read: '...all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from such diversity in the Australian community and internationally'. Again the engagement with learning languages is elusive, indirect, left ambiguous, reflecting yet again the Australian ambivalence in facing head-on the issue of learning to communicate in other languages readily available in each Australian neighbourhood and used daily by millions of Australians around the country.

Appendix 1

Languages policy and curriculum – the steps backwards

1987	Release of the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987), the first comprehensive, national policy on languages; it provides a stimulus for policy construction in states and territories.
1988	National Survey of Languages indicates that only one quarter of schools throughout Australia provide languages in the curriculum.
1989	The Australian Education Council includes languages as a key learning area in the national Common and Agreed Goals of Schooling.
1991	Adoption of *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP), marking a retreat away from an engagement with diversity and pluralism; literacy in English only is accorded a clear priority.
	Establishment of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) to oversee the development of national curriculum guidelines, that is, the Curriculum Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools.
1992	The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) establishes a working group to develop an Asian languages and studies strategy for Australian schools.
1994	The COAG report *Asian languages and Australia's economic future* is endorsed setting a priority for the study of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. This report becomes a de facto policy on languages (albeit Asian languages only).
1994–1999	Ongoing policy development in each state and territory modelled on the COAG report, for example, the review of languages in South Australia in 1996 and in New South Wales in 1997–1998.
	Devolution of curriculum and assessment activities to the states and territories in relation to the Statements and Profiles; ongoing review and adaptation of the languages Statement and Profile at state and territory level; development of curriculum/standards/benchmark frameworks.
1997	Release of the National Multicultural Advisory Council's issues paper *Multicultural Australia: The way forward.*
1998	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA): federal, state and territory ministers agree to a national benchmark standard in literacy for Years 3 and 5. Literacy is conceptualised again as occurring in English only.
	DEETYA releases *Literacy for all: The challenge for Australian schools.*

MCEETYA releases a revised version of the *Common and agreed goals for schooling in the twenty-first century* for consultation. Languages are included as one of the goals; the theme of outcomes, assessment and accountability are strongly emphasised.

Evaluation of the Commonwealth's schools language programs and the release (not widely) of *Advancing Australia's languages: Overview report*. No action has been taken in relation to this report.

1999 MCEETYA: federal, state and territory ministers agree to release the final version of the *Common and agreed goals for schooling in the twenty-first century.*

Release of the National Multicultural Advisory Council's report *Australian multiculturalism for a new century: Towards inclusiveness*

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Appendix 2

Languages policy and curriculum – the revisional shifts and the questions they leave unanswered

1 The rationale for learning languages in Australia remains the fundamental philosophical stumbling block for policy reconstructors and revisionists. When questions are raised, they are met with implemented silence. For example: Is the economic rationale the most convenient justification for learning languages in school? Or is it the most appropriate justification for Chinese students learning Chinese in Australian schools?

Any analysis of the rationale statements of the languages policies provided for the Australian states and territories reveals yet another dimension of possible and additional rationales, so that the claims being made for learning languages appear always exaggerated, forced and, ironically, open to multiple questioning because of fundamental lack in revisionist documents of anything to do with research in the areas of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, languages and cultures in contact, cultural studies, social anthropology, intercultural communication – just to name a few discipline areas of continuous investigation in Australian and international research institutes whose field of study deals directly with language and culture acquisition in multicultural societies.

2 A steadily growing government emphasis on literacy in English for all Australians gives rise to a number of questions in the field of literacy in general: Is there a relationship between literacy in one language and another? Is literacy simply added to an already heavily loaded rationale statement for languages because of political expediency ('killing two problem birds at once')? Are real but totally misguided comments by teachers the basis of this shift in curriculum priorities (for example, 'this child needs English language support – she can't possibly do another language'; or 'we need adequate time for our subject – they can't add languages to the curriculum by taking time away from us')?

3 There has been a gradual shift in the configuration of languages towards an increase in those Asian languages that are funded and a decrease in those European languages which are not. For example, the COAG report, and the National Asian Languages Strategy for Australian Schools (NALSAS) Proficiency Project it recommended, represent the Commonwealth government's attempt to redefine languages education. This Proficiency Project is a national initiative established to define the outcomes of learning with the aim of achieving accountability. The latter purpose has never been stated explicitly because of the national character of the project and the fact that education policy and procedures are determined at the state level. Dealing as they do with only four languages out of the 45 or more that are taught and formally assessed at senior

secondary level in Australia, the rationale of both the report and the project is based only on economic gains, as opposed to educational, social or personal gains for language learning. Moreover, they both emphasise only the assessment of outcomes, as opposed to the processes of teaching, learning, assessing and evaluating. In other words, they provide a simplistic view of the complexity of languages education.

4 An expansion of languages in primary schools and a consequent shift in resources from the secondary to primary level is evident. For example, in South Australia in the period 1991–95, languages enrolments in primary schools increased from 27.9 per cent to 88.5 per cent of the total primary enrolments. The Victorian policy states that by the year 2000 all students in P–10 will be learning a language – the greatest increase has occurred in the primary years. The ACT policy states that by 1996 all Year 7–8 students will be learning a language, and by the year 2000, all Year 3–6 students. These statements reveal a commitment to expansion in the primary area, and also that such expansion is mandated. Is such expansion sustainable in terms of qualified teachers, and the availability of appropriate curricula?

5 An increasing emphasis on languages and vocational education and training raises questions about the extent to which schools should include vocationally oriented modules or courses. For example, beyond the school, questions arise as to whether the vocational courses should stand alone or be integrated; how to meet both generic and industry-specific requirements; the extent to which industry actually recognises the benefits of learning languages and values such a capability in the repertoire of qualities it seeks in its employees; and last but not least, the complex issue of articulation across sectors in order to enhance language proficiency sequentially and over time.

6 At the tertiary level, there are few universities in Australia with a policy on languages. In many programs enrolments are declining, and certainly the percentage of the overall student population taking a language is generally very low (usually less then five per cent). In the resource climate in which universities are operating at present, many languages courses are vulnerable. At the same time, with the move towards internationalisation, in many institutions pathways are being developed for students, for example, through double degrees which incorporate languages and/or study abroad, concurrent diplomas or graduate diplomas in languages. These structures promise expansion, however, as Hagen (1994: 122) notes in relation to the United Kingdom:

> *...while the expansion has been welcomed in some institutions, in others it has been seen as a threat to the research and the specialist teaching function to which the staff are committed. College professors used to teaching advanced language work to specialist linguists, whose particular*

love may be nineteenth century French literature, can experience severe frustration and demoralisation when required to switch half their timetable to teaching survival French to mathematicians.

7 There is a major concern about teacher supply to cater for the expansion in languages programs, particularly in the primary sector. This issue is documented clearly, even graphically, in the reports Languages at the crossroads (Nicholas 1993) and Language teachers: The pivot of policy (ALLC 1996a). Teacher quality is also an issue and the need for teacher professional development is paramount, given the nature and speed of curriculum change and the increasing complexity of teachers' work.

8 There appears to be no systematic approach to gathering data routinely which assists the planning process, and when there is some form of data gathering the discussion is anecdotal and weak and its presentation in each state make virtually impossible any attempt to build a picture nationally. Policy development cannot proceed without ongoing attention to implementation and the analysis of relevant data – anecdotal evidence will not suffice.

9 Decision-making processes in the area of policy development and resource allocation at both federal and state level are not transparent. The major formal advisory body advising the Commonwealth on funding is the NALSAS (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools) Taskforce, yet both the composition of this group and its terms of reference are restricted to Asian languages and studies and the voices of the managers. Another dimension of this issue is the fact that teachers are removed from the decision-making process, yet, they are responsible for implementing languages programs, in line with policy, in schools.

10 Last but not least is the lack of consideration of parents' concerns in the decision-making process. The mechanism of framing and maintaining judgments of value and usefulness of learning 'other' languages has always been identified by parents with 'multicultural policy', because for them it defines education, it drafts and implements rules and regulations, and it authors and dictates 'languages education policy' in schools. Yet, the parents only enter into the picture when policies and their recommendations are implemented, but they are never included in the debate (see Papademetre 1998).

11 All the above issues are interrelated and require a global perspective. No federal or state government so far has taken the multiple-effect nature of the issues into serious account.

16 Reconciled to what? Reconciliation and the Northern Territory's bilingual education program, 1973–1998

Christine Nicholls

Towards an explanation of the elimination of the bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory

Even the most cursory examination of the chronology of events described in the appendix to this chapter, *Australia's Indigenous languages: An historical overview*, reveals that the recent axing of the Indigenous language bilingual education programs is not an historical anomaly, but rather, is to be understood as part of an historical and discursive continuum. Historian and sociologist Patrick Wolfe (1994) has convincingly put forward three interconnected ideas which are relevant in terms of illuminating the thinking behind the Northern Territory CLP government's notion of '*re*-placing' Indigenous language programs with English-only programs. Wolfe (p 93) writes that:

> ...settler colonisation is predicated upon displacing Indigenes from (or re-placing them on) the land – as Deborah Bird Rose (1991: 46) points out, to get in the way, all the native has to do is stay at home. Since it cuts through Indigenous society to connect directly to its territorial basis, it is awkward to speak of settler colonisation as an articulation between coloniser and colonised. As a social relationship, it is best conceived of as a negative articulation. The cultural logic which is organic to a negative articulation is one of elimination.

I would argue that the Northern Territory government's decision to axe the bilingual education programs is based on that same cultural logic, the cultural logic of elimination, which seeks to replace Indigenous language and society with the society and language of the colonisers (in this case, English). A historical and discursive continuity with the social engineering policies and projects of the past, based on the cultural logic of elimination, is demonstrable here.

In relation to the axing of the bilingual education programs, one also needs to pose the question of what exactly, in this case, 'the natives' have been getting in the way *of* by obstinately continuing to speak their languages and furthermore stubbornly refusing to stop teaching them to their kids in officially sanctioned (that is, sanctioned by the state) school programs. The short answer here (because this is too big a question for this particular chapter) is that once again, it comes down to the question of land ownership. Linguistic evidence is critical in land claims and many a land claim has faltered because of a lack of linguistic evidence of ownership. In the state's eyes, a continuing Indigenous linguistic identity is constitutive of proof of 'authentic' Aboriginality which has to be asserted for a land claim to succeed. If one accepts Wolfe's thesis of the primacy of the cultural logic of elimination as evinced by Australian settler colonization, the elimination of that abiding, continuing Indigenous linguistic identity is absolutely essential to the elimination of continuing land claims and, as such, presents itself if not as the final solution, certainly as contributing to it.

A second related idea of Wolfe's is useful in this context in coming to an understanding of what on the face of it is an apparently irrational government decision, given the same government's rather florid but empty rhetoric promoting parental involvement in children's education. (In fact, it is rather ironic that the Education Department's current 'buzz' slogan adorning many a curriculum document is 'parents as partners', given the outraged reactions of many Indigenous parents to not being consulted about the bilingual education cuts.) Clearly, in this case, there is greater continuity with past practice than is at first apparent. This second important idea is underpinned by Wolfe's understanding of invasion not as an *event* but as a *structure*, enabling us:

> ...to perceive the underlying coherence of Australian history, which links present government policy to the initial invasions. In this light, invasion emerges as a structure, not as an event. (1994: 96)

Seen in this way, the Northern Territory government's decision to axe the bilingual education programs in the face of such strong and vocal community opposition should in no way be regarded as anomalous, but simply a very recent manifestation of that earlier discursive regime. I believe that observers should keep that continuity in view, especially in this year of the Centenary of Federation where the 'making of nation' is symbolised by attempts to consolidate 'our' single 'national' language, English. The chronology of events described in the appendix needs to be regarded as constituting a similar historical and discursive continuum.

The third and final idea of Wolfe's which has some purchase in terms of my argument concerns the inherently gendered nature of the settler colonising project in the Australian instance particularly where as Wolfe reminds us '...the dormant landscape [is] unequivocally coded female' (1994: 93).

Language too is almost invariably coded female by monolingual English speakers (hence the English expression 'mother tongue'). I do not believe it to be merely coincidental that the majority of workers in bilingual education programs, like the majority of primary school teachers elsewhere in Australia, are women – women workers who have in many instances have had to become political activists in the light of the recent decision.

To conclude this section, if one accepts the framework of analysis provided by Wolfe, I would argue that underlying this recent and aggressive action of axing bilingual education programs is the same cultural logic of elimination which seeks to replace Indigenous languages and society with that of the colonisers. I would also argue that the affected Indigenous groups are well aware of the historical and discursive continuities at work here. Such insight is the prerogative of the colonised and this is why the alarm bells are ringing for members of those communities affected by the cuts to the bilingual education programs and there has been such an unremittingly strong response.

Because this case also involves the synergy of two such powerfully symbolic elements – children and languages – and taps into collective social memory in ways that are profoundly disturbing to Indigenous parents and grandparents, I predict that the protests against the cuts to the bilingual education programs aren't simply going to go away, as the Northern Territory government probably hopes, but that the emergent social movement which began in response to the government's ill-conceived action will continue to gain momentum.

Reconciled to what? The question of reconciliation and the closure of the Northern Territory's bilingual education programs

The Northern Territory's bilingual education programs came into being in 1973 under the broader policy imprimatur of 'self-determination' for Indigenous Australians (see Appendix). In other words, these programs were inaugurated well before there was any official government policy for, commitment to, or even talk of, Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation. Yet it could be argued that the philosophy and the practice of bilingual education for Indigenous Australian children provided a virtually unparalleled opportunity, and a perfect template, for genuine Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation, requiring as it does, cooperation, team-teaching and other mutually respectful Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions based on sharing knowledge and space.

Through bilingual education programs, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians plan lessons together, work closely together on a daily basis, frequently get to know each other at a deep level as both colleagues and friends, laugh together, and discuss and debate together serious issues arising from work. These connections are made all too rarely in other circumstances. The bilingual education programs have also provided Indigenous Australians with work and superannuation; that is, the programs have provided them with a stable economic base, which is one of the chief tenets of the reconciliation policy. At the same time, Indigenous linguistic identity and self-esteem have been enhanced and social capital and trust have accrued.

Twenty-five years on, in December 1998, the Northern Territory disbanded these unique programs without any consultation with the affected communities, and against their express wishes. At roughly the same time policy moves in the direction of a formal reconciliation process received bipartisan support.

The question must be raised about the extent to which the Northern Territory government's decision to remove their support and to take funding away from these programs is actually 'reconcilable' with the broader policy notion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous reconciliation, another motion in support of which was carried in the Australian Parliament in the latter part of 1999. How can true reconciliation occur when actions of this nature, tantamount to continuing 'cultural harm', are current practice and not consigned to the past? How can the wounds of the past be healed, and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians genuinely move on in a context of such current and continuing cultural and linguistic harm? What measures need to be taken to stem the loss of Australia's Indigenous language heritage, recognizing that what Wolfe (1994) has described as 'the cultural logic of elimination' is occurring right now, and is not merely a thing of the past? True reconciliation, one might posit, will only become possible when such negative actions are relegated to the past.

How we might begin to address such continuing cultural and linguistic harm?

No single strategy will be effective in counteracting continuing Indigenous language loss, which without any doubt will be hastened by the most recent act of educational vandalism on the part of the Northern Territory government. In terms of stemming the flow of Indigenous language loss, any effective solution will necessarily have to be multifaceted. In this section I am putting forward two strategies.

One strategy is to follow the examples provided by the Welsh Language Act (1993) and the Native American Languages Act (1990). The Welsh Language Act, giving equal status to Welsh and English languages, is the preferred model here as it spells out Welsh language rights in every aspect of life. We are in need of a similar Australian Languages Act in which overt rights and policy are spelled out in such a way, plainly for all to see, and so that sanctions can be applied to those who fail to observe or respect those rights.

The suggested Australian Languages Act, in which Indigenous Australian languages are afforded equal official and legal status to that presently accorded to the English language, should be presented in and passed through the Federal Australian Parliament. Furthermore, we need such a framework of legislative protection to be enacted and put in place very quickly before it is too late.

There is also the related need to switch from covert policies to overt policies for Australia's Indigenous languages, in which language rights are not simply assumed but have real force. Covert policies are those which either gloss over or do not mention language in legal documents, policy documents, administrative codes and so forth, but which assume that language rights will automatically be taken for granted and will be respected. One such document is our current Draft Declaration for Reconciliation, which is found to be wanting in this regard. Guarantees of linguistic rights have to be inferred in the current draft reconciliation document, where they need to be upfront and unambiguous.

I suggest that the assumption that language rights will be respected automatically is naive, particularly in the present political climate and in the light of past policies and practices (see the Appendix if further persuasion is needed). Often authorities assure speakers of minority languages that they are mindful of their rights but don't and won't specify those rights in written policy. Overt policies, on the other hand, explicitly state the rights of any or all linguistic groups to the use of their language in whatever domains they either choose or specify, with or without interpreters. The Draft Declaration for Reconciliation, for example, needs to be strengthened into a more overt statement about the place and significance of Australia's Indigenous languages.

Similarly, there is a need to switch from policies of mere toleration of Australia's Indigenous languages to policies actively promoting Australia's Indigenous languages in a variety of settings (that is, we need 'promotive' policies rather than 'tolerative' policies in relation to Australia's Indigenous languages). Again, this has implications for Australia's eventual document of reconciliation.

In relation to Indigenous Australian languages, promotive policies would encourage the use of those languages by constitutional, administrative and legal guarantees while at the same time getting governments to put their money where their mouths are and devoting and guaranteeing resources (money, personnel, inservice programs, physical space, as well as to particular domains like the courts, schools and so forth) for those languages.

In terms of reconciliation and Australia's Indigenous languages, there needs to be a critical examination of the Draft Declaration for Reconciliation with a view to recommending some changes to turn it into a more 'overt' and 'promotive' declaration in relation to Australia's Indigenous languages, rather than one which is 'covert' and 'tolerative' and in which language rights seem to be accepted as a given, without even being declared. Now is definitely the time to place the views of Indigenous language activists on the public record so that when the long-awaited Reconciliation is finally achieved Indigenous language rights will be enshrined in the document.

Here is the draft reconciliation document as it stands (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1999).

> **Draft Declaration for Reconciliation**
>
> Speaking with one voice, we the people of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together recognizing the gift of one another's presence.
>
> We value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of traditional lands and waters.
>
> We respect and recognize continuing customary laws, beliefs and traditions.
>
> And through the land and its first peoples, we may taste this spirituality and rejoice in its grandeur.
>
> We acknowledge this land was colonised without the consent of the original inhabitants.
>
> Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.
>
> And so we take this step: as one part of the nation expresses its sorrow and profoundly regrets the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the policy and forgives.
>
> Our new journey then begins. We must learn our shared history, walk together and grow together to enrich our understanding.
>
> We desire a future where all Australians enjoy equal rights and share opportunities and responsibilities according to their aspirations.
>
> And so, we pledge ourselves to stop injustice, address disadvantage, and respect the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine their own destinies.
>
> Therefore, we stand proud as a united Australia that respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all.

Here is an example of how the current Draft Document of Reconciliation could be revised, thereby strengthening the references to Indigenous languages.

> **Draft Declaration for Reconciliation**
>
> (Note: Capitals indicate my additions/changes.)
>
> (Speaking with one voice,) SPEAKING WITH MANY VOICES, BUT WITH A COMMON GOAL, we the people of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together recognizing the gift of one another's presence.
>
> We value the unique status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of traditional lands and waters, AND AS THE SPEAKERS OF THE ORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGES.
>
> We respect and recognize continuing customary laws, beliefs, LANGUAGES and traditions.

> And through the land and its first peoples, we may taste this spirituality and rejoice in its grandeur.
>
> We acknowledge this land was colonised without the consent of the original inhabitants.
>
> Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.
>
> And so we take this step: as one part of the nation expresses its sorrow and profoundly regrets the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the policy and forgives.
>
> Our new journey then begins. We must learn our shared history, walk together and grow together to enrich our understanding.
>
> We desire a future where all Australians enjoy equal rights and share opportunities and responsibilities according to their aspirations.
>
> And so, we pledge ourselves to stop injustice, address disadvantage, and respect the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine their own destinies.
>
> Therefore, we stand proud as a united Australia that respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, INCLUDING LANGUAGES AND CULTURE, and provides justice and equity for all.

Conclusion

To conclude, if any of Australia's Indigenous languages are to survive in the long term, there is a need to develop a sense of history of Indigenous language loss and to comprehend that unless there is active intervention to reverse what is still happening (for example, the recent closure of the bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory) those losses will soon become irreversible.

An Australian Languages Act, in which Indigenous Australian languages are afforded equal official and legal status to that of the English language, needs to be presented in and passed through the Federal Australian Parliament. The preferred option would be for the bill to go through the major political parties, or alternatively, if this is not possible, it should be presented as a private member's bill.

Finally, recommendations should be made to government regarding the Draft Declaration for Reconciliation in order to strengthen the position of Indigenous languages, cultures and communication. Some suggestions have been made in this chapter. Others might have different suggestions or wish to comment on the draft revisions which appear above. If we do not tackle these and related issues soon, we will have to reconcile ourselves to the permanent loss of almost all of Australia's Indigenous languages heritage.

Appendix
Australia's Indigenous languages: An historical overview

In this appendix I have described and made comments on policies, significant legislation and key events that have had an impact on Australia's Indigenous languages.

60,000 years ago (before Captain James Cook) – 1788

There were approximately 250 Australian languages with 600 to 800 dialects throughout what has since become known as 'Australia'. The only significant outside linguistic contact over this period, beginning in the 17th century, was with the Macassans whose language has left identifiable traces on some 'Top End' Indigenous Australian languages.

'Australia' was a thriving multicultural, multilingual place consisting of ethnically and linguistically diverse populations who co-existed harmoniously, on the whole. The 'average Australian' spoke about eight languages fluently. Multilingualism was the norm, as was multilingual education.

1788: The arrival of Captain Cook

With the arrival of Captain Cook came the beginnings of the imposition of English as the dominant language. Indigenous language maintenance became an issue for the first time.

Late 18th century – early 19th century

Initially there were some good intentions towards Australia's Indigenous languages and their speakers. Governor Phillip had orders from the King of England to keep lines of communication with Indigenous Australians open:

> ...You are to endeavour, by every possible means, to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. (George III, 1787 quoted in Troy 1994)

The establishment of a common language therefore became a priority for Phillip.

Relations between colonisers and colonised soon broke down. Phillip's response to this was to capture some Aborigines, force them to learn English, then use them as interpreters to enable the colonisers to distinguish friend from foe. Arabanoo was captured in December 1788, permanently handcuffed to prevent his escape, and force-fed English. Arabanoo was then used to facilitate some colonists learning a little of the Sydney language. Such 'linguistic experiments' soon faltered and were eventually abandoned (Troy 1994: 33–51).

19th century

Policies towards Aboriginal people and their languages were ad hoc. Each separate colony did its 'own thing' with regard to Indigenous Australians and their languages. At the same time, monolingualism in English began to be promoted as normative and ideal.

Massacres and other violent acts led to the loss of Indigenous lives and languages. The hegemonic view of the dominant group was that Aboriginal languages were primitive mumbo jumbo, and as such, were severely restricted as a means of expression and communication. Occasionally, however, there were scattered attempts on the part of some of the more enlightened (or in some cases, more evangelical) of the colonists to learn Indigenous languages. For example, the German Lutheran missionaries Teichelmann and Schürrmann set up a Kaurna language school on the banks of the River Torrens in South Australia in 1838, and published their grammar and word list of the Kaurna language in 1841. The aim was for the Kaurna children to learn to read and write English eventually, in what could be glossed as a kind of early prototype of a bilingual education program. However, intervention by Governor Gawler led to the closure of the Kaurna language school in 1845, followed by the banishment of Teichelmann and Schürrmann, after which the speaking of both Kaurna and German were forbidden.

1883: Removal of Aboriginal children began

As a direct result of colonization most Indigenous Australians experienced considerable erosion of their rights to socialise their own children and to educate them into Indigenous ways of life and languages. What later was to become known as the 'stolen generation(s)' (see, amongst others, Wilson 1997) was probably the most extreme manifestation of this general tendency. Separating the children from their parents (Read 1982), a practice which was to continue until the mid-1970s throughout most of Australia, and which affected thousands of Indigenous families, was tantamount to rupturing the possibility of intergenerational language and cultural transmission. The spectre of this and similar practices continues to this day to weigh upon the living memory of many older Indigenous Australians, and has contributed in no small measure to Indigenous language loss. Similarly, the practice of forcibly relocating Indigenous groups on land away from their own 'country', has in many instances led to language loss, more often than not via the adoption of English or a Kriol as a lingua franca.

1901: Federation and the White Australia Policy

The six colonies united in a federation becoming what is now called 'Australia'. The Immigration Restriction Act was introduced. (This became known as, in popular parlance, 'The White Australia Policy'.) Potential immigrants were obliged to sit a dictation test in English in order to gain entry to Australia. However, if 'undesirable' immigrants passed, they were forced to resit the test in various other languages until they failed. The policy projected an expectation that '...the ideal Australian would be monocultural, monolingual and monoracial' (Romaine 1991:1).

'Otherness' it seems was, and still is, framed linguistically (at least in part). I would suggest that the suppression of Indigenous languages and languages other than English has been instrumental to and not at all incidental in the 'making of nation', in this instance a modern liberal democracy which is a hybrid of the models of the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The notion of a common language for all, in this case English, was profoundly ideological: for the colonisers, English was an instrument of domination and central to the creation of the modern nation-state now known as Australia.

Removal of Aboriginal children from their families escalated, becoming entrenched as a matter of quasi-official policy (the 'stolen generations'). This continued through to the 1970s. The continuing enforced separation of many Aboriginal children from their parents was yet another factor interrupting 'normal' intergenerational Indigenous language transmission.

1910: The Protection Era

In relation to Indigenous Australians, this was the so-called 'Protection Era' – sometimes also called the era of 'restriction' or 'segregation'. (Some say this era started as early as 1840.) While in theory the 'Protection Era' was supposed to protect Indigenous people from the continuing incursions of the colonists, often by physically separating the groups, in reality these were very difficult times for many Indigenous groups.

Massacres continued (Aboriginal people in northern Australia refer to these as 'the killing times'). Children continued to be taken from parents. Aboriginal languages continued to be suppressed in schools and in other social arenas.

1939: Assimilation policy mooted

An assimilation policy in relation to Aboriginal people and immigrants was mooted for the first time and started to take on quasi-official status. One of its most significant tenets was the idea of monolingualism in English. Where Aboriginal schools had been set up, English was, with rare exceptions, used as the sole and exclusive medium of instruction. Immigrants were also urged to abandon the use of languages other than English, especially in public. (This could be dubbed as an era of 'ethno-linguistic cleansing'.)

It is by no means accidental that this also coincided with the beginning of World War II. Faced with outside enemies, the need for internal unity and control was increased.

1945: Allied victory in World War II

The dominance of the English language became further entrenched as a direct result of the critical part played in the allied victory by the United States and its increasingly hegemonic economic status.

1952: Assimilation policy adopted

The assimilation policy was officially adopted. This marked the official beginning of the treatment of the ethnically and linguistically diverse Indigenous populations of Australia as the unitary, homogenous object of social and governmental policy.

The Cold War began.

1967: Citizenship for Aboriginal people

Citizenship extended to Australian Aboriginal people via a referendum. This was an important step in constituting Aboriginal people as 'normalised', self-disciplined English-speaking subjects within a political democracy.

1972–1975: The Whitlam years

1972 marked the beginning of a new era significant for Indigenous language maintenance with the election of the federal Whitlam Labor government. This led to the official adoption of a new government policy of self-determination for Aboriginal people. However, a number of commentators (notably Beckett 1988b; Rowse 1992b) have since described this not as a shift from classic colonialism to the policy of genuine self-determination but to 'welfare colonialism' (a term first formulated by Paine 1977). In effect this amounted to a softer form of colonialism no longer dependent on coercion and repressive measures but requiring the political assent of certain key members of the colonised group.

The Whitlam government inaugurated a number of reforms in Aboriginal education from the beginning of 1973, including the introduction of bilingual education programs on a trial basis using English and local Aboriginal languages initially in a small number of schools, mainly situated in the Top End of the Northern Territory. By 1982 there were 17 such programs in place in the Northern Territory using a total of 21 different Aboriginal languages.

1974 saw the establishment of the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) at Darwin Community College as part of the federal Labor government reforms. (SAL later became known as CALL, the Centre of Australian Languages and Linguistics, following a change in location to the all-Indigenous Batchelor College.) SAL's original emphasis was on:

> …training Indigenous people as linguists and on developing materials for bilingual programs but, over the years, the program developed a much broader view of its role in helping Indigenous people to work towards maintaining their languages. (McKay 1996)

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It could be argued that when the bilingual education programs were introduced in 1973, this action was tantamount to the recognition of Indigenous 'linguistic title' rights for the speakers of the small number of Indigenous Australian languages that were given official recognition and legitimacy in the designated government and non-government bilingual schools.

The federal government's decision to introduce the bilingual education programs could be seen as akin to being the 'Mabo' of Indigenous language rights. Like the Mabo decision (which was not to occur for almost another 20 years and which recognised Indigenous land rights in very limited circumstances, for example, when an unbroken connection with the land could be demonstrated), bilingual education programs catered primarily for only those Aboriginal groups who could demonstrate a continuing, virtually unbroken connection with their ancestral tongues. Equally, like the Mabo decision, in which the rights of Indigenous landholders were not to prevail over those of white 'owners', the bilingual programs were premised on the idea of coexistence of the language of the colonisers – English – and the local vernacular language in a limited number of primary school classrooms.

Those Indigenous people and communities who had suffered what the state deemed to be 'too much' language loss were effectively debarred from participation in these state-sanctioned bilingual programs, and from the conferral of 'Indigenous language rights'. The introduction of the bilingual education programs was in fact a modest, small 'l' liberal reform. But while there was nothing revolutionary about the introduction of these programs, like the Mabo decision again, they had immense, indeed immeasurable, symbolic value.

1982: A national language policy

The development of a national language policy was initiated by the Fraser Liberal government.

There was a growing awareness among Indigenous Australians about social, political, land and language rights, and pride in Aboriginal heritage.

Mid to late 1980s

A report on the above national language policy was published, with many recommendations supporting Aboriginal languages (SSCEA 1984) . The findings of this report eventually prompted the *National Policy on Languages* (NPL) in 1987.

The mid-1980s marked the beginning of strenuous efforts directed towards the revival, reclamation, revitalization and resurrection of many of Australia's endangered Indigenous languages, following overseas models. In the majority of instances these efforts were (and still are) led by Indigenous Australians concerned about the loss of their own ancestral languages, in conjunction with linguists who frequently use archival texts to contribute to the processes of language revival. (For example, the grammar of Teichelmann and Schürrmann has assisted Kaurna language revival in South Australia.)

1987: The National Policy on Languages (NLP)

The federal government introduced the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987), commonly known as the NPL. The NPL had four main principles:

- English for all;
- Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages;
- A language other than English (LOTE) for all;
- Equitable and widespread language services.

Later in 1987 the formation of the Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education (AACLAME) was announced and given the task of overseeing and implementing the NPL.

The National Aboriginal Languages Program (NALP) was introduced within the frameworks of the NPL and AACLAME. NALP was given an operational budget of $2.5 million for 1987–1990. This was widely acknowledged as the first federal government support plan for Indigenous languages, outside the schooling sector.

Some critics did however argue that the notion of 'supporting' the relatively few remaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages gave the impression that they were positioned far more strongly than was the actual case. However, the NPL clearly stated that 'support' involved action to revitalise languages and specified that all monies for this initiative should be controlled by Indigenous communities.

While the NPL made it absolutely clear that it did not place the NALP within a multicultural framework but afforded them a special status, the implications of the NALP being placed within the context of multicultural policy was regarded by some Indigenous groups (for example, the Warlpiri at Yuendumu) as a cause for concern. In essence, grouping Australian languages with all other 'foreign languages' was construed as amounting to the non-recognition of, or even a denial of, that special status of Australia's Indigenous languages and their precarious state.

1989: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy was launched with a strong commitment to develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989).

By this point, only about ten per cent of Australia's Indigenous languages had survived in what could be described as any kind of 'healthy' state (Schmidt 1990).

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1990: The Green Paper

John Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, released the Green Paper outlining a national policy for language and literacy. It provoked an outcry from community-based Indigenous language workers and support groups because it concentrated almost exclusively on language maintenance within school-based education.

1991: The White Paper

The White Paper *Australia's Language: The Australian language and literacy policy* (DEET 1991) was endorsed by the government and released with few substantial changes in emphasis. In grouping Indigenous languages with English as a second language, English as a second dialect, and English literacy programs, the White Paper failed to specify how much funding would be available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (Henderson & Hartman 1994).

The *Final report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* was released (Johnston 1991). 'The deaths in custody report', as it soon became known, confirmed the critical importance of Aboriginal languages for Aboriginal people, as vehicles for social identification, stability and unity.

1993: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program (ATSILIP – originally ALIP) was set up, as was ALES (Aboriginal Languages Education Strategy). The aim of ATSILIP was to support Aboriginal-controlled regional Aboriginal Language Centres; and for ALES the aim was to support Indigenous language programs in educational institutions.

A process of reconciliation of non-Indigenous Australians with Indigenous Australians had been mooted for some years by the federal Labor government. As a result, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was set up with bipartisan support, identifying eight 'key issues' which needed attention before reconciliation could genuinely take place.

Of the key issues, the most relevant to the future of Australia's by now extremely endangered Indigenous languages would seem to be '…Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture [and by implication, languages] as a valued part of Australian heritage' (NLLIA 1995).

1996: Australian Indigenous Languages Framework

The Australian Indigenous Languages Framework was launched. This was a national curriculum allowing Australian students to study Indigenous languages in all states at matriculation level. Prior to this there had been only a few, mostly sporadic attempts to teach Australian languages in Australian high schools, and no officially endorsed secondary education curriculum, apart from the occasional ad hoc regional initiative.

The conservative Howard Coalition federal government was voted into office. The change of government led to massive financial cutbacks to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the peak government-funded Aboriginal body, as well as to other Aboriginal organizations and bodies in Australia. These cutbacks were to have a considerable and deleterious effect on many Australia's Indigenous language programs and related initiatives in a relatively short time frame.

1998: Bilingual education programs disbanded

On 1 December 1998, in a top-down decision, the Northern Territory CLP government legislated to disband the unique bilingual education programs, the first of which had been set up in 1973, on the strength of the recommendation of a four person review team of government appointees. This action was taken without any consultation with the affected communities and against the express wishes of the overwhelming majority of those community members and other stakeholders.

The wording in which the decision to axe the programs was expressed in the government's press releases was revealing. Government missives spoke of 'phasing out' the bilingual education programs and 'replacing' the bilingual education programs in Indigenous schools with English-only programs, professing that their major concern was for the low levels of English literacy outcomes in bilingual education programs. The governmental edict lacked any acknowledgment of the fact that English as a second language was already part of the existing bilingual education programs. Affected communities and other stakeholders expressed outrage at this decision.

1999: Protests against bilingual education program cuts

In early 1999 protestors presented the largest petition in the history of the Northern Territory Parliament, opposing the bilingual education program cuts. Meetings and conferences were convened, organisations such as ATSIC and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission were lobbied, and community newsletters, Internet sites and chat groups were set up for members of remote communities to interact with each other regarding the closure of the programs. The 20 communities and schools directly affected energetically attempted to mobilise social power and resources to save their bilingual programs by appealing to human rights, linguistic rights, morality, justice, survival and identity.

While the Northern Territory government undoubtedly believed, and probably fervently hoped, that the initial wave of protest by Indigenous communities, under the graphic and compelling slogan of 'Don't cut off our tongues', would simply dissipate, so far it has not abated. The affected communities have showed every sign of maintaining their rage, to the point that many have gone public in their responses, mobilising the media and other resources in support of their protests.

The justification for the bilingual education program cuts was ostensibly to facilitate and improve the poor delivery of English as a Second Language programs to remote Aboriginal community schools. But in the past 12 months the Northern Territory government demonstrably failed to act on their promise.

In October 1999 *Learning lessons*, a review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory by former federal Labor Party Senator Bob Collins (the Collins report) was released. Collins acknowledged in his report that many Indigenous people felt passionate about and committed to their bilingual education programs, and that it was no coincidence that the (statistically significant) majority of trained Indigenous teachers had come from bilingual schools, and even conceded that the academic results of many bilingual schools had been very good. Nevertheless Collins failed to come out and support the continuation of the bilingual education programs. There is also some confusion in the report about the relationship between bilingual schooling and 'two way' education. The report endorsed 'two way education' in preference to bilingual schooling, without ever defining what 'two way education' actually was. It is important to note in this context that bilingual education and 'two way' education are not synonyms.

In November 1999 the Northern Territory's Chief Minister, Denis Burke, was reported as saying that providing an Aboriginal interpreter service to the Territory's Indigenous constituency could be likened to 'giving wheelchairs to people who should be able to walk' (Toohey 1999). Burke's 'wheelchair' analogy discloses the politically ignorant view that the everyday use of an Indigenous language is a handicap, a kind of intellectual malingering or faked disability that needs to be voluntarily relinquished, rather than a form of real linguistic, social, cultural and ecological wealth requiring the highest valuation. The Chief Minister's extraordinary choice of metaphor here is extremely revealing about the ideological position of many of those opposed to the continuing usage of Indigenous languages in this country. A historical and discursive continuity with assimilationist policies and projects of the past is demonstrable here.

Part 5

New openings

17 Sing out that song: The textual activities of social technologies in an Aboriginal community

Jack Frawley

> *Well songs, I write them in my own way, and some of the meanings – where I come from, grandfather country, or even other places. Other places, other people country. Other people.*
>
> *(John Louie Munkara 1997 pers. comm.)*

Introduction

This paper explores the concept of print literacy as being socially and culturally driven, and its positioning as a variable social technology within the context of an Aboriginal community. What unites the social technologies of story, song, dance, art and print literacy is that each has the capacity of being a textual activity.[1] The addition of print literacy builds on an impressive repertoire of Tiwi systems of meaning-making.[2] The discussion emphasises that print literacy, within the Tiwi context, is characterised by individual creativity, expression and innovation. It also highlights that, like other historical encounters, the Tiwi response to print literacy has been essentially creative and pragmatic. The discussion covers a period which has been dominated by government legislation, policies, ordinances and regulations enacted by federal and state governments and implemented, until recently, by Catholic missions.

The policy context

From the outset, mission and government policy was underpinned by a view that industrial training coupled with 'a moderate literary and rich religious training' would be the facilities through which Tiwi would be civilised and converted to the 'one true faith' (Gsell 1955: 38). Central to this view was the necessity for agricultural and domestic training and the development of a 'house consciousness'.[3] Consequently, government ordinances, regulations and policies set out to control almost every aspect of Tiwi life. In 1951, a new Department of Territories was established with Paul Hasluck as its first Minister. At a Native Welfare Conference convened by Hasluck it was agreed that assimilation was the main objective in Aboriginal affairs. This was enshrined in the 1953 Welfare Ordinance which replaced the Aboriginal Ordinance of 1918, and meant that all Aborigines 'of full descent' were wards under the guardianship of the Director of Welfare.[4] Consequently, missionaries assumed considerable power as 'police and priests – the whole lot in one' (archival material NTA NTRS226. TS733).

On Bathurst Island the boys' school had been established during the first years of the mission. The curriculum and the teaching concentrated basically on two aspects: indoctrination and assimilation. Some years later, the girls' school was established after F X Gsell, the mission founder, had purchased his 'first wife', and it became the basis of the dormitory system.[5] In the early years the primary objectives of education were the teaching of Catholicism, and gender-specific training in domestic work and manual skills.

In 1951, the Bathurst Island Mission's stated policy was roundly criticised by C R Lambert, Secretary of the Commonwealth's Native Affairs Branch, who accused the mission of aiming to 'build a wall around Bathurst Island and run it as a tribal community cloister'.[6] The mission's policy was at odds with the government's official policy of assimilation.[7] Further, Lambert (archival material AA CRS A452 1955/457) stated that:

> ...the functions of providing for the care, welfare, education and advancement of the natives are statutory responsibilities of the Director of Native Affairs. Those functions should only be exercised through the mission, where the mission is willing to, and does in fact carry out the policy and directions of the administration.

In 1950 special responsibility for education of Aborigines was assumed by the Commonwealth Office of Education; however, with the creation of the new Department of Territories and the passing of the Welfare Act, education of Aborigines was transferred from the Commonwealth Office of Education to the Welfare Branch (Northern Territory) of the Department of Territories. In order to continue to receive government subsidies, the mission took some action in response to Lambert's criticisms, particularly in regard to education.[8] The mission school on Bathurst Island maintained a dormitory system for post-primary girls and the curriculum emphasised religious instruction.[9] However, the school curriculum needed to become much broader if it was to continue to receive departmental support and so 'on the Government having insisted that the Mission should teach English, we proceeded to teach English' (Gsell 1955: 107). By the mid-1950s the school curriculum consisted of (archival material AA CRS A452/1955 457 Evans):

> ...reading, writing, arithmetic, phonetics, poetry, speech training, and religious instruction in junior classes, with drawing, nature study and geography added in the senior classes... In the afternoons girls do handicrafts, work on mat weaving, sewing and gardening whilst the boys perform gardening work only. Senior girls assist in the kitchen and laundry.

> Hygiene instruction is included in all classes... In addition to the daily religious instruction given to the schoolchildren, the following religious exercises are undertaken: Friday evening, 6.45pm – Benediction; Sunday morning 7.00am – Mass; Sunday 3.00pm – Benediction; Saturday evening – Confession.

During the 1960s changes in government policy occurred which signalled a shift in *murrintawi* attitudes.[10] Such a shift allowed aspects of Tiwi society 'back in'. Nationally this culminated in the 1967 referendum, while at the local level Tiwi contribution to community affairs was acknowledged with the establishment of a local Tribal Council.[11] As an indirect result of the federal government's Training Allowance Scheme, which was introduced in 1969, aspects of Tiwi culture and language were included in the school curriculum through the employment of Tiwi as assistant teachers. Also, cultural days became part of school-life. *Papurraluwi* would perform dances, make art, tell stories and sing songs.[12] In 1972 the dormitory was closed and a new system of schooling introduced. The primary school became co-educational with separate post-primary girls and post-primary boys' schools.

The change of federal government in 1972 saw shifts in policies in Aboriginal affairs.[13] Consequently, bilingual education was introduced as a formal program in some Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. Prior to Osborne's study of Tiwi language, undertaken between 1966 and 1972 (Osborne 1974), the only linguist to have studied the language in any detail was Capell (1967). Basic word lists had been complied as early as 1914 Spencer (1914) and later by Father McGrath (Pye 1977). As a result of Osborne's research, a Tiwi grammar was described, several Tiwi stories were written down, and a dictionary was compiled. Parallel to Osborne's research, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) was researching the language with an aim to produce a Tiwi translation of the bible (Osborne 1974). In 1975 a bilingual program commenced at the co-educational junior school under the direction of an appointed teacher linguist and with the assistance of an SIL linguist who had been working with some Tiwi on bible translation (Lee 1987). Also, Tiwi were employed as literacy workers. They researched and transcribed Tiwi oral texts and assisted in the preparation of class readers. The bilingual program officially recognised Tiwi as the first language of instruction. Tiwi language was used in the early primary years as a foundation for vernacular literacy, leading to a gradual introduction of English by mid-primary. Tiwi cultural studies also had a comprehensive role in the school curriculum. Moreover, the establishment of the Nguiu Nginingawila Literature Production Centre to produce publications was the impetus for Tiwi to be involved in writing literature.[14]

Up to the 1970s the mission was responsible for the operations of all the important economic activities and services; however, by 1973 Nguiu Town Council had been formed and several Tiwi organisations were in operation.[15] The mission's main functions had devolved to the provision of religious support and guidance, and the running of the schools and the hospital (Stanley 1983). The implementation of the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act meant that Tiwi were represented by the Northern Land Council, although by 1978 the Tiwi Land Council was formed to represent all Tiwi. In 1974, the first Aboriginal was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly – a Tiwi man, Hyacinth Tungatalum.[16]

From the 1970s onwards changes at both a national and local level have resulted in a larger representation by Tiwi in running their own affairs. These changes include the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act; the formation of the Tiwi Land Council in 1978; and, in 1987, the formation of the Nguiu Community Council under the Local Government Act. In terms of education, several changes have occurred, notably in curriculum and staffing, partly as a result of various programs funded through the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy.[17] The primary school has been operating a bilingual/bicultural education program since 1975, and there is now a Tiwi principal. Furthermore, an executive group, known as Milimika and made up of four representatives of the Tiwi staff, assists with the day to day running of the school.[18] In 1991 the primary school changed its name from St Teresa to Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School to reflect a commitment to the localisation of the school and the commitment to both-ways education. The development of a teacher education program at Batchelor College in the 1980s has resulted in several Tiwi gaining teacher education qualifications. Tiwi now represent the majority of trained teachers and student teachers in both schools. Consequently, there has been greater involvement by Tiwi educators in educational issues, particularly in providing critical comments on a wide range of educational matters.[19]

Similarly, mission attitudes and processes have changed. The mission's main functions now have devolved to the provision of religious support and guidance, with some representation in education and health services. Church services are often conducted in Tiwi and English, and most hymns are sung in Tiwi. On some special days of celebration, such as weddings and baptisms, *yoyi* is a central element.[20]

An alternative historical paradigm

Historical studies of settler interactions with Aboriginal societies present a diversity of analyses and views. Many of these studies are situated in either two historical paradigms prominent in writing about Australian history: one in which Aborigines are depicted as being essentially passive – I refer to this as the 'acquiescent paradigm'; the other, suggesting a 'frontier paradigm' (Reynolds 1987) characterised by conflict and resistance.

Historical writing in an acquiescent paradigm portrays Aborigines as passive and resigned victims. For example, Gsell (1955) depicts Tiwi as being 'children of the bush' (p.24), 'overgrown children' (p 35) whose only hope was 'contact with civilisation' (p 34). In the 'frontier paradigm', historical writing is 'dominated by conflict, by European violence on the one side and Aboriginal resistance on the other' (Attwood 1990: 124). This theme of conflict and violence is evident in a wide range of writing on Tiwi culture and history (Pilling 1958; Robinson 1990; Forrest 1995; Venbrux 1995;

Cameron 1998). It is acknowledged that conflict and violence was a feature of Tiwi encounters with *murrintawi*; however, it is argued that it was not the deciding factor in determining the course of relationships between the Tiwi and *murrintawi*.

An alternative to these acquiescent/frontier paradigms is one in which Aborigines are dynamic agents in the historical process, crossing borders of the frontier as they engage in essentially creative discourses and/or processes with the interlopers (McGrath 1987; Fels 1988). I call this alternative the 'interactive paradigm'. Writing history in an interactive paradigm creates possibilities for many-sided historical analyses. In terms of Tiwi history, it provides a creative explanation for the complex ways in which Tiwi dealt with, and fashioned, a response to interactions with Macassans, the British, the missionaries, and Australian federal and state/territory governments. New social technologies that accompanied these interactions were first subject to experimentation and analyses, and then either eventually accepted or rejected. Through accordance, these SOCIAL technologies took on Tiwi qualities and design. This approach is underpinned by a process of acculturation, which is essentially creative and pragmatic, and affirms a dual consciousness.

The remainder of this chapter examines the social technology of print literacy and analyses its social and cultural uses within a Tiwi context.

Social technologies

Social technologies are defined as being the result of combining 'social arrangements and technologies' (Rowse 1996). Examples of social technologies in Tiwi society range from *pukumwani* and *kurlama* ceremonies, to employment and workplaces.[21] The latter are the 'new' features of current Tiwi society, and as such are here to stay until they are superseded by an improved technology or are no longer required. These social technologies have been socially, culturally and historically constructed. Print literacy is a 'new' social technology added to the Tiwi repertoire of meaning-making systems of which story, song, dance and art are principal. They are connected because they are, in part, textual activities.

Walton (1996) suggests a socially driven model of literacy, and positions it as a variable social technology. As a textual activity, print literacy draws on the technology of alphabetic text. This social technology model of literacy acknowledges that it can be best understood within its sociocultural and historical contexts (Walton 1996). It is useful, then, to construct a historical understanding in order to provide a context for better understanding literacy in Tiwi society.

The history of textual activities emphasises that literacy is ideological in that it is not neutral, but is 'shaped by deeply held ideological positions, which can be either implicit or explicit' (Baynham 1995: 1). To put it another way, the history of Tiwi encounters with *murrintawi* has shown an emphasis on the 'politics of literacy' (Christie 1995b). Throughout documented Tiwi history, textual artefacts were used as devices to make claim on Tiwi country.[22] From first contact by *murrintawi*, the overriding emphasis of textual activities has been for 'colonising, christianising and civilising' purposes (McConnochie 1982). The history of these encounters brings the ideologies of textual activities to the fore. However, what is usually overlooked in historical accounts of Tiwi/*murrintawi* encounters is the way in which Tiwi responded to these interactions. In the Tiwi social technologies of story, song, dance, and art, pragmatic and creative responses to these encounters are demonstrated. The contexts of these practices were, in a historical sense, and still are, usually created and/or performed at *pukumwani* and *kurlama* ceremonies.

Christie (1995a), in his discussion on the history of Yolngu literacy, stresses Yolngu ceremony as texts, in that the production and interpretation of ceremonial art invite a multiplicity of readings and processes that mirror literary texts. In Tiwi ceremonies, many of these texts have historical origins. Street (1994: 10) suggests that:

> ...the bringers of the 'new' literacy were so intent on making the 'illiterate' literate, on bringing 'light into dark', on stimulating skills and cognitive processes they assumed were absent that they were unable to see what was already there, the rich literacy practices in which people engaged without the help of outside agencies.

Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) propose that the foundations of literacy are concerned with codes, modes and meanings. These are useful concepts for discussing print literacy as a social technology in the context of Tiwi society. Codes are 'the grapho-numeric designs that together make the messages' (Lo Bianco & Freebody 1997: 19). To further widen this definition, codes could also include symbolic gesture. Other forms of inscription, not just alphabetic text but dots and stripes, can convey a message in a visual format through artistic rendering and performance such as the painting of *turtini*.[23] Body symbolism can also convey a message. Depending on the purpose of the text, its creator will make a conscious decision about the appropriate genre and may call on literary devices to enhance the meaning. An *amparruwu* song may use symbolism, poetic images and metaphors as this will be appreciated by an understanding audience and gain its performer a degree of prestige (Grau 1983: 55).[24]

Textual activities convey meaning through multiple modes. These modes whether spoken, inscribed or performed, rely on the social technologies of story, song, dance, art and print literacy. A participant in a textual activity will choose the appropriate mode to convey the specially created text whether it is a chart showing details of a coastline, an oral story or a dance performed for the dead. By participating in a textual activity, the participant will draw on their repertoire of capabilities to interpret meanings which will assist them to break the text's code, participate in its meaning and use it functionally and critically (Freebody & Luke 1990).

Vignette: We crash and burn...

I am on my way to the Nguiu club for a drink. As I walk past various buildings I can't help noticing the amount of writing. There is writing on walls of buildings, on the electricity poles that line the road, on seats, on fences, on tables and on vehicles that pass me. On the school canteen wall (Figure 17.1) and on the old council building wall (Figure 17.2) are some texts.[25]

Figure 17.1 Canteen wall text

M*you slut BITCH you fuck different boy

Figure 17.2 Council wall texts

BRENDON JPK AS GREG WILLEMES
N*2 BLUES THE BEST

ICE T

RACHEL HUNTER 96

WE CRASH AND BURN AS
PARAMOUNT PICTURES PAT
AND MIKE

KCS LOVE HANYBODY

NEW KIDS OF THE BLOCK

GFK CJK OTLVS

TMP.PNK ONLY US TWO BEST
FRIENDS 95

K HEIGL ♥s M BOSINICK ONLIE
TRUE LOVE 9T7

MIYARTUWI BOY'S & GIRL'S
THE BEST

AGK* WAZ HEYA SAYING HI TO
JANET JACKSON

Throughout the community there is writing. It is on 'walls, rocks, trees and doors' (Christie 1995a) – it is virtually everywhere and it serves many purposes. The Tiwi use of print literacy exemplifies the ways in which Tiwi have transformed literacy to suit their own sociocultural needs. They have taken hold of it, extended it, developed it and owned it (Barton 1994a). The acquiring of technical encoding/decoding skills, not only for the English language but also the vernacular, has added to the repertoire of textual activities. This development of the technical encoding and decoding skills of print literacy, and its merging with other social technologies is described as being essentially syncretic. This syncretic practice, as applied to print literacy, has parallels with Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's (1989: 38) concept of 'abrogation and appropriation'.

> Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in words without the process of appropriation the moment of abrogation may not extend beyond a reversal of the assumptions of the privilege, the 'normal'. Appropriation is the process by which the language is taken up and made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience.

It would be difficult to make sense of the meaning of the texts (Figures 17.1 and 17.2) outside the cultural context. In order to understand 'M* you slut bitch you fuck different boy' one needs to know why it is an issue with the writer, and why the accusation is aired in such a public manner. This text is culturally loaded. In the past, accusations against wrong doing were a public affair with the accused harangued in the camp. The enormous frequency of disputes arose directly or indirectly 'out of cases of seduction...[and that]...over 90 per cent of legal affairs were matters in which women were in some way involved' (Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988: 86). The writing on the canteen wall (Figure 17.1) implies both of these elements – M* is accused of wrongdoing, and this accusation is made public on the wall of a community facility. It is not an idle accusation but one of full intent. The accusation appears to be over an infidelity. However, the choice of the word 'different' may also mean that the relationship is at odds with the uniform practice for sexual relationships determined by *yiminga*.[26]

The writing on the council wall (Figure 17.2) is dense and has multiple meanings depending on the reader's understanding of the cultural context. For example, there appears to be an emphasis on personal names. One piece of writing reads 'AGK* was heya saying hi to Janet Jackson'. On the surface it may seem to be an idolisation of a pop star. However, viewed through a Tiwi sociocultural lens, the text takes on a deeper meaning. In the past, the giving of personal names was an important task and was the initial responsibility of the father who would take some time deliberating and discussing his choice with other elderly relatives, particularly his mother.[27] The name had to be unique and one coined for the occasion. The father would draw on his personal experiences as a source, although it may 'be one of his own given names, which after he gives it to the child no longer belongs to him' (Goodale 1971: 29). Names had to be changed on the death of the name-giver, and if a name sounded similar to that of the deceased, it too was changed. These names would then become *pukumwani* and would no longer be used. New names were given to the children by the new father once the mother remarried. However, once a child was named by the father, other family members could also give names, particularly anyone who the child referred to as *rringani*.[28] Names were also given during ceremonies; therefore, a person could accumulate many names during their lifetime. Goodale (1971: 32) remarks that one woman 'of forty-five had at least eighteen names'. Personal names were not frequently used as terms of address, instead kinship terms were used as 'the name is actually considered to be a possession of its owner…[and]…indiscriminate use of anybody's personal possessions is not tolerated for long' (p 31).

Surnames, suggested by Father Cosgrove, were introduced on Bathurst Island Mission in the early 1960s as an element of its policy 'to prepare the Natives under its control for their future assimilation into the general Australian community'. It was felt important that, for administrative purposes, 'each family is taught the use and meaning of its surname' (Morris 1964: 1). Nowadays, this practice of conforming to regular surnames remains. Another practice, introduced by the mission, was the giving of names at the Catholic rituals of baptism and confirmation. This practice continues today but a distinction is made between the names given in a Tiwi tradition (personal names) and the names given as part of the Catholic ritual (English names). However, the responsibility of giving the first English name, now at baptism, still rests with the father. What appears to be common practice is that the child will be given the name of the father or father's father. If the child is female, then the male name of the father or father's father becomes female. For example, Arthur becomes Arthurina, Stanley becomes Stanlicia, Samuel becomes Samuella and Adam becomes Adama. Alternatively a boy and a girl may both receive the father's name, for example Casmir and Casmira. Notwithstanding these Catholic rituals, the practice of giving personal names continues to take place at Tiwi ceremonies:

> *I got a couple of Tiwi names. Pwanikiyawayi, Ambarwuawayi and when my father died we had a ceremony and his Tiwi name they passed it back to me. Pwanikiyawayi that's his Tiwi name so when he died, we had a big ceremony and then my second father, like uncle was running the ceremony gave me that name, my father's name. Gave it back to me…This is different ceremony. My father's Tiwi name was given, I don't know who but I was a child. So it was a ceremony for my father. And his Tiwi name whoever give it to him, decided my father, S*, and uncle decided to get that name off him because he's no longer alive, to pass it back to me. I was the eldest in the family. (John Louie Munkara 1997 pers. comm.)*

The giving of personal names at Tiwi ceremonies is still the responsibility of the person referred to as *rringani*:

> *Well, B* I called him like dad. Because my father and him got on well. They used to look after each other, worry, care about each other. What I mean that they looked after each other, like they used to be like brothers. You know, they shared things and all of that. And so when father passed away…they gave me his Tiwi name back to me and they had this kurlama, oh five or six years back, 1980s when B* was alive. When he went for this kurlama he said, 'I'm giving you a name.' So when I was called out so I went down to kurlama area, that's when he gave me that name. (John Louie Munkara 1997 pers. comm.)*

Tiwi still accumulate personal names:

> *The most recent one is when my last one before my father passed away. He*

> *gave me three Tiwi names, and the last one he gave me two before he passed away. Pulauwurrapajimi and Pulauwurrawaya, two of them now, I got five. (Cisco Babui 1997 pers. comm.)*

What has emerged over the years, due to the influence of newspapers, television and video, is the adoption of popular English names, especially of sporting or music personalities – hence AGK*'s reference to 'Janet Jackson' (Figure 17.2). In the text 'We crash and burn as Paramount Pictures Pat and Mike' the writer/s not only claim the names but also identify the source of inspiration – the movie becomes the personal experience. Another writer lays claim to his favourite football star Greg Williams ('Greg Willemes'), another to American rap performer Ice T, and another to actor Rachel Hunter. The displaying of names in the public domain signifies that the name is considered to be the claimant's possession. This name then is frequently used as a term of reference or address. In keeping with Tiwi cultural practice, these names will become *pukumwani* on the death of the owner or on the death of the source, or if a death occurs where the deceased has a similar sounding name.

Two texts written on the council wall (Figure 17.2) are also statements of group membership – 'New Kids of the Block' and 'Miyartuwi boy's and girl's'. The latter is reference to affiliation with the matrilineal determined 'skin group' or *yiminga* to which a newborn is automatically assigned. Amongst other things, membership of yiminga will determine the correct marriage line, which offers a more complex reading of the text 'Miyartuwi boy's and girl's the best' and 'AGK* waz heya saying hi to Janet Jackson'. If the identity of the writer AGK* is known to be male, then this statement of saying 'hi' could in fact be a proposal to the owner of the 'Janet Jackson' name who, if adhering to acceptable sexual relationship lines, would belong to either the Wantarringuwi or Marntimapila skin group. If AGK* is female, then the text could be a statement affirming group affiliation and loyalty. Similarly, the text 'New Kids of the Block' could also read as a statement of group affiliation, although in this case the identity of the *yiminga* is unknown. What binds this group together is the identity as 'New Kids of the Block'. Such an affiliation with a group usually suggests childhood and/or adolescent membership. Therefore, using Goodale's (1971) description of Tiwi social structure, such a grouping would suggest that the members of 'New Kids of the Block' and 'TMP.PNK only us two best friends 95' belong to the one skin group because at this age 'all members…remain in close daily relationship' (p 76). This allegiance is commonplace amongst this age group. Once into adulthood, allegiance begins to shift as responsibilities brought about by adulthood and marriage become crucial.

Tiwi marriage in the past was based on a system of prenatal and neonatal betrothal, and widow exchange (Oswalt 1972). Once the Catholic mission was permanently established, it brought about change in the marriage system 'from polygyny to monogamy and in decreasing the differences in age between marriage partners' (Venbrux 1995: 227). However, that is not to say that the Tiwi system of marriage and the sexual politics of marriage were completely reformed. Even though Tiwi have become 'nominal Catholics and nominal monogamists they still adhere to the practice of an exchange of marriage partners' (Venbrux 1995: 227) along correct marriage lines determined by *yiminga* membership.

> One of the many things determined by one's skin group in Tiwi life is the marriage line. A marriage is usually arranged between families, but always keeping to the marriageable lines... Even those who apparently choose their partner do not make a random choice, but again they always adhere to the traditional lines of acceptable marriage. (Ward 1990: 17)

Lover relationships also exist. The two texts 'K Heigl ❤s M Bosinick onlie true love 9T7' and 'GFK CJK OTLVS' (Figure 17.2) could be public statements of lover partnerships. It would be safe to assume that these relationships are along the correct lines, otherwise the relationship would not be made public. The former text is more complex as the identities of the two involved are obscured by the adoption of the popular names of the film stars, K Heigl and M Bosinick, while the latter is easier to interpret through the use of initials. However, both are public statements of intention and commitment. These two texts could either be statements of future betrothal, in the formal Catholic sense, or of lover relationships.

One other feature of the texts is the creativity displayed within the writing – 'hanybody' for 'anybody'; 'waz heya' for 'was here'; 'OTLVS' for 'only true loves'; '❤s' for 'loves'; and, '9T7' for 'ninety-seven'. Judging by the popularity of these devices, as there are many examples repeated elsewhere in the community, the creative use of alphabetic text is much admired.

Conclusion

Print literacy provides the mode for a range of texts to be created. Print literacy is located at one end of the language continuum where the message is mostly conveyed through written text. Within this sector there is a range of possibilities: the examples of texts publicly displayed on building walls, the banned drinkers' list at the social club, or the council and school newsletters. Moreover, some Tiwi participate in a range of other print literacy activities including personal letters and greeting cards to articles in academic journals. These texts demonstrate a syncretic response to the new technology of print literacy.

Tiwi textual activities are characterised by individual creativity, expression and innovation which are evident in the social technologies of story, song, dance, art and print literacy. If literacy 'can be taken to mean the whole range of practices which surround and give effect to written language' (Lo Bianco & Freebody 1997: 26) then the system of Tiwi textual activities emphasises diverse literacies. These literacies operate in a number of ways and serve different purposes.

Before the 'bringers of the "new" literacy' (Street 1994: 10) had arrived, Tiwi were already engaged in rich textual activities through the established social technologies of story, song, dance, and art. These activities operated and served purposes within the substantive domains of Tiwi society. For example, song composition and song performance operated across domains. A song may have been composed and first performed for cultural reasons, such as at a *kurlama*, but if it was well received then it would be performed in a social context. Like they are today, good songs would be taken up and sung throughout the camp. The subject matter of songs also varied – they could be political, that is dealing with issues of disputes, or could be one of profound lament, for example *amparruwu* songs. A composer/performer would be appreciated for their skilled use of metaphor and other literary devices to enhance the song's meaning. Once performed, the receivers would draw on their own skills to analyse and to participate in the meanings of the song text.

The Tiwi experience of the new technology of print literacy is underpinned by a process of acculturation, that is essentially creative and pragmatic, and affirms a dual consciousness. This is in accord with the interactive historical paradigm that is characterised by a syncretic method of creatively responding to a wide range of new experiences. These experiences include interactions with the 'new' technologies as well as a wide range of government policies and programs.

Notes

1 A 'textual activity' refers to a stretch of spoken (sung), symbolic (performed) and written (visual) language that does a job within a social and cultural context.

2 The word 'tiwi' was a term first used by an Australian-born anthropologist C W M Hart (1930: 170) to classify the people of Bathurst and Melville Islands. Linguistically, 'tiwi' is a plural noun meaning 'people' (Lee 1996). Hart listed nine 'countries' – *Tiklauila, Wurangwila, Mingwila, Malauila, Wilrangwila, Munupula, Turupula, Yeimpi* and *Mandiimbula*. In fact, these terms actually describe the country affiliation rather than the names of the country. For example, a person who belongs to the territory of the island named *Tikilaru* uses the word *Tiklauila* to describe that affiliation. The size and number of the countries, as well as the boundaries have changed since Hart first recorded them. At the time of writing, the Tiwi countries recognised by the Tiwi Land Council (1996: 7) are: *Mantiyupwi, Murnupi, Malawu, Tikilaru, Wulirangkuwu, Wurangkuwu, Yimpinari* and *Mirrikawuyanga*.

3 In a review report on the Bathurst Island Mission for the period ending 1 December 1951, Ted Evans, the Acting District Superintendent, reported that: 'In spite of the long period over which the Bathurst Island Mission has been established there is as yet no real evidence of the development of a house consciousness among the native peoples' (archival material AA CRS A452/1955 457 Bathurst Island Mission Review Reports).

4 In 1954 a comprehensive survey of all Northern Territory Aborigines was undertaken to enable the implementation of the Welfare Ordinance. This Register of Wards became known as 'the stud book' (Egan 1996: xv).

5 The first purchase was of a young girl called Martina. Gsell purchased her in 1921 for 'a good blanket, a sack of my best flour, a good sharp knife, a hatchet of good-quality steel, a mirror, a handsome teapot, some gaily coloured beads, a pipe and some good tobacco, some yards of brightly patterned

calico, some tins of meat and pots of treacle' (Gsell 1955: 83). Many accounts of the Martina episode and the 'Bishop with 150 wives' have been published (Ritchie & Raine 1934; Gsell 1955; Simpson 1962; Flynn 1963; Pye 1977). Later young infant girls were purchased by the mission for £2 each (archival material AA CRS A431 1951/1294). By the 1950s the mission was keeping a record of all children on the mission with dates of birth and 'totemic groupings'. Before a girl married her 'choice', details were crosschecked with the mission's database for genealogy and relationship and to 'be in accordance with tribal social set-up'. Once this was confirmed, approval was granted by the mission (archival material AA CRS A452 1955/457).

6 The mission's policy was:'(a) to protect the aborigines from detribalizing influences outside the reserve; (b) to provide constant medical care for the sick and to cater especially for the upbringing of the children and the care of mothers and infants; (c) to provide regular schooling for the children and after primary schooling to instruct the girls in home crafts and infant welfare, and the boys in manual trade; (d) to encourage the aborigines to build more suitable houses by providing their own timber for saw-milling; (e) to develop the saw-milling industry and to encourage the development of carpentry and boat-building; (f) to promote a sense of greater responsibility by allocating to young married couples a garden area and livestock; (g) to explore the possibility of large scale farming projects if suitable soils can be found; (h) in general, to encourage the building up of a self-contained community of aborigines who, without losing what is best in their old traditions and without being uprooted from their tribal grounds, may as civilized Christians lead contented and industrious lives' (archival material AA CRS A431 1951/1294. Review Report 1950).

7 Lambert stated that 'generally the policy should be: (a) develop the resources of the island so that they may support settlement after the European manner; (b) educate the natives to the European way of life and train them for employment; (c) gradually settle on the island, after the European manner, those for whom a self-supporting means of livelihood can be found there; (d) gradually move from employment in other districts those for whom self-supporting occupations cannot be found on the island; (e) arrange education and employment placement so that it is organized to meeting requirements according to opportunities available; (f) ultimately aim to do away with the reserve and station except in so far the latter is required for Christian purposes, the care of the aged, infirm and sick' (archival material AA CRS A452 1955/457 Bathurst Island Mission Review Reports).

8 Prior to government insistence and as a condition of receiving subsidies, the teaching of English was primarily for indoctrination purposes. Gsell signalled 'his willingness to conform to the curriculum formative education which has been drawn up by the Commonwealth Office of Education' (archival material AA CRS A431 1951/1294).

9 The building of a boys' school and girls' school was completed in the mid-1950s. When the girls reached puberty they were placed in the dormitory. The boys had a separate school. The dormitory system ended in 1972.

10 I use the Tiwi words *murrintawi* to refer to non-Aboriginal people. When referring to other specific Aboriginal groups I use the accepted terminology such as 'Yolngu'. I use Aboriginal as an adjective and Aborigines as a noun in non-specific discussion or reference.

11 The 1967 referendum gave the federal government constitutional responsibility for the protection of indigenous people's rights and interests.

12 *papurraluwi*: older Tiwi.

13 In 1972 the assimilation policy that had dominated Aboriginal affairs for 20 years was replaced by the Whitlam government's policy of self-determination. The policy was based on a recognition that Aboriginal people had to be actively involved in the decision-making about their own lives.

14 Of the 250 plus entries listed as educational readers in the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission's *Tiwi Islands bibliography* (1996), 181 have been written by 35 individual Tiwi authors with another 20 by joint Tiwi authors. Topics include education, history, language, religion, cultural and social studies, and health. However, Tiwi authors are not restricted to local publications.

15 These included the Bathurst Island Housing Association, Bima Wear, Tiwi Pima Art (combining Tiwi designs and pottery), Nguiu Ullintjinni Association (combining the store, garage, bakery, fish trading, garden, poultry and restaurant) and Nguiu Ullintjinni Sports and Social Club. Through the Northern Territory Local Government Act, Nguiu gained community government status in 1987 giving it powers to enact by-laws for the community. Of the business operated by Nguiu Ullintjinni Association in1983, the store, garage and restaurant remain.

16 Since then several Tiwi have stood, unsuccessfully, for election. However, Stan Tipiloura was voted in as the ALP member for Arafura during the late 1980s and early 1990s but, sadly, died in office.

17 See Nicholls, this volume, for further discussion on recent policy developments in Aboriginal education.

18 *milimika*: cleared ground used in *kurlama* and *pukumwani* ceremonies.

19 For an analysis of Tiwi writing on educational issues see Frawley (1995).

20 *yoyi*: dance and ceremony.

21 *pukumwani*: A term used to refer to a series of mortuary rituals. It also can refer to a person closely related to the deceased, and the belongings, house, country and name of the deceased. All of these are said to be *pukumwani*. Words that have a similar sound to the deceased person's name can also be *pukumwani*. The closest English word to describe this association would be 'taboo'.

kurlama: An annual ceremony held over three nights and performed by a Tiwi male of adult status. In the past it was essentially an initiation ceremony but this aspect has been de-emphasised over the years. Its central aim now is for the renewal and regeneration of a participant's world (Venbrux 1995). *Kurlama* also refers to a type of yam used in the ceremony.

22 In this historical account, textual artefacts include ships' journals, maps, charts, correspondence and government legislation, regulations, policies and programs.

23 *turtini*: burial poles now commonly known as *pukumwani* poles.

24 *Amparruwu* songs are performed by those with the bereavement status of *amparruwi* including the widow or widower, during *yiloti*, a stage in the *pukumwani* ceremony. Often in the composing and singing of *amparruwu* songs,the singer/composer will employ the device of singing the song as a dialogue between the singer and the deceased.

25 Any change in names is shown with an asterisk. This is to ensure anonymity.

26 *yiminga*: maternal descent group, commonly referred to as 'skin group'.

27 The 'father' was not always the biological father but could be a stepfather.

28 *rringani*: father, father's brother(s), mother's maternal grandfather.

Abbreviations

AACLAME	Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education
AAE	Adult Aboriginal Education
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACAL	Australian Council for Adult Literacy
ACCESS	Australian Assessment of Communicative Skills
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADC	Australian Deafness Council
AEA Council	Australian Ethnic Affairs Council
AEC	Australian Education Council
AEP	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (referred to as AEP: Aboriginal Education Policy)
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AIMA	Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs
ALAC	Literacy Action Campaign
ALES	Aboriginal Languages Education Strategy
ALF	Australian Literacy Federation
ALLC	Australian Language and Literacy Council
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ALSB	Adult Literacy Services Bureau
AMEP	Adult Migrant English (formerly Education) Program
AMES	Adult Migrant English (formerly Education) Services
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
API Council	Australian Population and Immigration Council
ASC	Asian Studies Council
AsIA	Asia in Australia
ASLLP	Australian Second Language Learning Program
ASLPR	Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (Committee)
ASSs	Artificial Sign Systems
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

ATSILIP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program (originally ALIP)
AUSIT	Australian Society of Interpreters and Translators
Auslan	Australian Sign Language
CALL	Centre of Australian Languages and Linguistics
CARE	Committee Against Regressive Education
CDCS	Centre for Deafness and Communication Studies
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFAC	Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGEA	Certificates of General Education for Adults
CLCLP	Centre for Literacy, Culture and Language Pedagogy
CLP	Country Liberal Party (Nicholls Chapter)
CLP	Commonwealth Literacy Policy (Lo Bianco Chapter)
CLOTE	Community Language Other Than English
CMEP	Child Migrant Education Program
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPDLE	Centre for Professional Development in Language Education
CRASTE	Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education
CRDLL	Centre for Research and Development in Language and Literacy
CSWE	Certificates in Spoken and Written English
CURASS	Curriculum and Assessment Committee
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DETE	Department of Education, Training and Employment
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment (England)
DILGEA	Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs
DSS	Department of Social Security
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EPES	Employment Placement Enterprises
ERL	English as a replacement language
ESL	English as Second Language
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
FECCA	Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia
HRSCAE	House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education
HRSCATSIA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

HRSCEET	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ILCM	Interim Literacy Course Matrix
ILY	International Literacy Year
I/T	Interpreting/Translating
LIA	Languages Institute of Australia
LOTE	Languages other than English
MACSP	Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Supplementation Program
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
MEP	Multicultural Education Program
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NAEC	National Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee
NALP	National Aboriginal Languages Project
NALSAS	National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCAELLS	National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy
NCELTR	National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NLLIA	National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia
NMAC	National Multicultural Advisory Council
NPL	National Policy on Languages
NSELS	National Schools English Literacy Survey
NSLs	Natural Sign Languages
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMA	Office of Multicultural Affairs
OTFE	Office of Technical and Further Education
PEPES	Private Employment Placement Enterprises
QMCC	Queensland Multicultural Coordinating Committee
RAWFA	Reading and Writing for Adults
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAE	Standard Australian English
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
SE	Signed English
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SIP	Special Intervention Program

SSCEA	Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TC	Total Communication
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Langauges
TIS	Telephone Interpreting Service
VCAB	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VITS	Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service
WA	Western Australia
WAALC	Western Australian Adult Literacy Council
WATESOL	Western Australian Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy

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